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ISIS:

AN EGYPTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

LONDON:
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ISIS: 1853

AN EGYPTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

BY

JAMES AUGUSTUS ST. JOHN.

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"From town to town—from clime to clime—
He stealeth along with the stealing time,
Pausing nowhere—tarrying none,
But wandering ever, away, and on."

T. K. HERVEY.

Ἡ μέγιστη τῶν θεῶν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων Ἶσις.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1853.

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TO

HELEN CORNELIA ST. JOHN.

My dear Daughter,

You have seen the following work, the record of one of my many wanderings, and the depository of my best feelings and most carefully-formed opinions, grow up under my hands. You have sat with me through the winter's darkness and the summer's light, while I have been endeavouring to give permanence to my ideas of the Inner Life of Egypt; you have watched the growth of those fictions—designed each to inculcate some opinion, or to illustrate some moral—which I have interwoven with my reminiscences;

and to you, therefore, more fitly than to any one else, may I present these Volumes as a memorial of my affectionate gratitude. Whatever it may prove to others, to you and to me it will always be the memento of happy hours. To us at least Isis has been a beneficent spirit; and in the hope that many daughters and many fathers will share our admiration for the land over which she once reigned as goddess and queen, I turn from her and from you, to consider with your brothers the Revolutions that disturb or menace the society in which we live.

I am,

My dear HELEN,

Your affectionate Father,

JAMES AUGUSTUS ST. JOHN.

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TO EGYPT.

WRITTEN FOR "ISIS."

How was thy throne exalted, hoary land!
But now, its steps are memories! Still thou art
Warm with the beatings of a younger heart.
Between the goals of Time I see thee stand
Flush'd from set suns, and pointing with thy hand
To dawning day, when the old curse shall be
Lifted from off thy spirit, and on thee
Shall rest thy first-born aspect of command.
'Tis not enough for thee to lie reclined
By that blue stream, in faded robe that shrouds
The skeleton of Pow'r, 'neath purple skies—
Thou, who didst erst build up thy solemn mind
To such high faith, that round its top the clouds
Floated, dim shadows of a creed more wise.

PATRICK SCOTT.

Preparing for Publication,

One Vol. post 8vo.

THEORY OF REVOLUTIONS.

BY

JAMES AUGUSTUS ST. JOHN.

"We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which being taught, return
To plague the inventors. Thus even-handed Justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips."—SHAKESPEARE.

ISIS:

AN

EGYPTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

I.

I DREAMT a dream, in early youth, and, lo! I was in Amenti, with all its intoxicating influences about me. Evening was coming on—the evening of the tropics,—calm, balmy, voluptuous. Far over the mythical wastes of Libya the sun still showed a portion of his golden disk, and, like a lover lingering in the arms of his mistress, seemed to be rendered immovable by the fascination of the earth's beauty.

It is in the nature of sleep to be incongruous. Things incompatible were huddled strangely together; the daylight that would not fade, intermingled with moonlight and stars and glittering constellations; the sense of extreme silence accompanied by the songs of birds, the splashing of fountains, and the melancholy sighing of the wind among leaves and boughs. I felt I was in

the region of the dead; but Death to the old Egyptians, instead of being a grim and grisly phantom, was the harbinger of joy and pleasure. His realm, therefore, according to their fancy, contained all that was bright and exhilarating upon earth, with whatever the invisible can supply to heighten and set it off. Waking, I might have felt some reluctance to enter a place known to be peopled with nothing but ghosts; but when Sleep has taken you by the hand, to show you the wonders of his world, you hesitate at nothing, are shocked at nothing, but do, say, and see the most extraordinary and portentous things without surprise or offence.

Of course the Egyptians took care to have Amenti in their own climate, somewhere between the Nile and the Desert, partly above-ground, partly subterranean, filled with gods and goddesses, well supplied with all kinds of delicate provisions, and fanned by breezes softer, if possible, and more refreshing, than those which haunt the bosom of the Nile in spring. To be perfectly in keeping I ought to have been conducted by some divinity, with the head of a dog, a hawk, or a wolf, such as I afterwards became familiar with among the ruins of the Thebaid. Isis managed things more considerately, and gave me, for guide, one of those light-footed damsels of Amenti who resemble the Ghawazi of the grosser world, with large dark eyes, a laughing physiognomy, and hair luxuriant

as Eve's. With this agreeable companion, whose language seemed perfectly intelligible without an interpreter, I stood on the borders of the Mystic Lake, separating the two worlds, breathed over by sluggish winds, which leave it for ever calm and motionless—the proper image of eternity.

Though not celebrated among my friends for long sight, I seemed, on this occasion, to have the eyes of Lynceus, and could see across the waste of waters, as far as the dim shore, where the souls embark on their way to the dominions of Isis. They came down in troops, pale and shivering, through dark and shaggy groves, carpeted with rough moss, cold, comfortless, dripping with ooze, and slippery to the foot. There the shadowy bark awaited them; on stepping into which their earthly habiliments vanished, and a faint glimmer of immortal light seemed to dawn about their figures. As the boat pushed off from the terrestrial shore, their forms grew gradually brighter, and, by the time it had traversed the lake, they were invested with surpassing beauty, and landed gaily, being apparently conscious they were entering their real home, the seat of everlasting rest, where there is neither sorrow nor suffering, but, instead, all that can inspire perfect and prolonged ecstasy.

Among the clover-fields, rose-gardens, acacia-copses, and palm-groves of the real Nile, one often experiences at evening a deep rapture, which suggested to the old mummy-makers the idea of

absorption in the Divinity. Imagine what the sensation must be when translated into Amenti. It might naturally be supposed, taking all things into account, that the population of the place would be crowded. But owing to its vastness, the ghosts no sooner landed than they filed off, seemingly at pleasure, to the right or left, into interminable shining avenues, and were speedily lost to view.

One thing I especially remarked, namely, that the inhabitants wore no garments, a fashion different from that prevailing in the heavens of more northern nations, where the rigour of the climate indissolubly connects the idea of warm clothing with comfort and pleasure. Here all sorts of drapery would have been an incumbrance. The air was tempered to a genial softness, and withal so fragrant, that it seemed to be nothing but the breath of Isis diffused everywhere.

At length I found myself moving by the side of my companion towards the mouth of certain cavern temples hewn in the face of a distant range of mountains. Her figure was that of Aphrodite, somewhat enlarged. Her black hair, parting here and there, showed portions of the white shoulder, while a few stray tresses descended over her bosom; she laughed and talked incessantly, always referring to things familiar to us both, as if we had been brought up together from the cradle.

In spite of the fascination of her voice and

manner, I found time to look about me. Once, in Upper Nubia, I remember lingering long about a thicket composed of unknown plants and shrubs, in the hope of discovering, in some unseen flower, the source of a perfume of unparalleled sweetness, which exhaled amid the rays of the noonday sun. Here, as we passed, every copse breathed forth odours still more delicious. Trees laden with purple and golden fruit threw their boughs overhead; violets, roses, the flower of the trinity, and the pale veronica, gemmed the spaces between the groves, where at intervals glittered numerous lakes and ponds, on whose surface the white and the blue lotus expanded their chalices to catch, in their fall, the odoriferous dews.

I wish the old Egyptians could have made mummies of flowers, and given us, in all their brilliance, specimens of those terrestrial stars of which they made companions for themselves. But was not this what they aimed at, when they embalmed the objects of their love; and was not Amenti itself an attempt to confer eternal duration on their thoughts and affections? We observe all around us fade—our hopes, our loves, our preferences, our thoughts; and we strive to discover some means of seizing them ere they quit us, and fixing them for ever. Everything here on earth is transitory and phenomenal, glancing, unsteady, like the morning vapour; yet our longing is after permanent things, beauty that fades not, fragrance that never

cloys, brightness that becomes a part of ourselves, existence merged yet not lost in the infinite. To realize this yearning of the soul, all nations have created for themselves an Amenti, with exhaustless fountains of joy, and for their ideas eternal abodes where they may repose, like the types of external nature in the mind of God. Was this also a part of my dream? I know not, but having thus far led me by the hand, my guide vanished, and I beheld her no more.

A rich portal of rose-granite, shaded above and on both sides by a profusion of black filaments like the tendrils of a vine, opened itself to receive me. I know not how I entered. Odours, sweeter than those of Eden, breathing delicately forth, intoxicated my senses, and so bewildered my ideas, that I lost all consciousness of time and place. Visions of unimaginable splendour came flashing on my mind. The passage as I advanced appeared to dilate and contract alternately, now presenting to the eye rows of sphynxes, and eagles, and exquisite spherical forms, bathed in celestial dews, and now becoming enveloped in a darkness softer and more entrancing than light. In the midst of the figures when the corridor grew luminous I beheld an image of the God of Silence, with the tip of his finger on his lips. I understood that a part at least of what I should feel and see within was never to be divulged. Long protracted corridors and mighty halls extended before me, endlessly, in

bewildering magnificence, but grandeur does not fill the heart. What I saw was not what I sought. A consciousness possessed me that somewhere in those subterranean passages lay the amulet which imparts value to life, which reveals to us its essence, which unites the perishable with the imperishable, which contracts, as it were, eternity into time, and expands time into eternity. An unseen presence filled those stupendous excavations. On I wandered, an invisible spirit leading me, the gorgeousness and splendour increasing, till at length I found myself standing by the couch of Isis, who smiled on me a godlike welcome as I approached.

The universe is only grand in the eyes of those who contemplate it, and all its grandeur cannot of itself gratify the craving of the soul. So, in Amenti, Isis did not seem to exist for the place, but the place for her. Everything you saw was only a stepping-stone to her presence. She, to the innumerable spirits inhabiting her realm, was life and nutriment. To kneel before her, as I now knelt, was the strongest desire of all on both sides of the Mystic Lake; and, with the exception of some few, who sullenly kept aloof in solitary wretchedness, all at one period or another of their lives were permitted to draw near the Goddess, and receive inspiration and a new soul from her. And what, then, when at length it became visible to me, was the marvellous beauty of Isis, transcend-

ing earth, transcending heaven, filling all souls with joy, and shedding over the spirit's track a golden light for ever? She seemed to unite within herself all types and forms of loveliness. To me, laying aside the Oriental externals of womanhood, she appeared with a profusion of auburn ringlets, large eyes of an amethystine blue like the firmament, and mouth and chin so exquisitely formed and dimpled that there is nothing to which they can be compared; her bosom, her waist, her limbs, were such as no sculptor's chisel could truly represent.

When the mind has conceived all it can of beauty, there remains still, in the person of Isis, something beyond. It may be said to be the sum of all the thoughts of man inspired by love from the creation. Isis is whatever has been, is, or shall be, and it has been given to no created thing entirely to comprehend her nature. As I stood gazing on her loveliness, all pride, all vanity, all thoughts of self left my heart. I felt as a little child on its mother's breast, save that I trembled much through apprehension, lest the Goddess should rise and depart, and reduce me to nothing by her absence.

One arm rested on the pillow, half encircling her head; with the other she held a little below her breast a rose-petalled lotus, whose chalice was filled with a crystalline fragrant dew. I had reached that point of existence, whose light, cast backward and forward, illuminates and hallows its whole

extent. Isis, as she lay before me, was a mystery containing within herself the source of all passions, all joys, all hopes, all delights.

Links, invisible even to the eye of intellect, bound me indissolubly to her, and from a distant point of space had drawn me thither through darkness and through light. Between us there was no need of language. All I then desired to know of her mysterious nature became gradually transparent, while my entire soul seemed imaged in hers. That there existed aught besides in the universe I had forgotten; my thoughts found in her the entire creation. By degrees she began to appear as the first link in a chain of existences, extending back to a crystal sea on the verge of time, and forward beyond where thought can penetrate.

Within her bosom a world of spirits lay hid, to be quickened hereafter into being, and encompass the globe with their vitality. Modesty and love encircled her form like a garment, and as I continued to gaze, the lotus with its perfumed dew became part of herself and disappeared; her upturned eyes swam languidly with delight; her voice, when she attempted to speak, faltered; she drew me to her with both hands.

The tempest of sensation was too much to be confined within the bonds of sleep. The vision was at an end, and awaking with a start, I found myself panting and half breathless on my pillow. Beneath my window the summer-tide was rising

silently, tremulous with innumerable pulsations, but without waves; the gulls and sea-mews flew to and fro, their white wings glancing in the morning sun, while the sky-lark, and multitudes of small birds, showered down music upon the earth.

II.

Plato remarks somewhere in his Dialogues, that there is no habit more subversive of the grandeur and firmness of the mind than that of building castles in the air. It may be so; yet who has not, at one time or other, delighted to be guilty of it? I wish I could take the reader with me into the pleasant fields encircling the town where my Nilotic vision came over me. There I had been accustomed in childhood to gather cowslips with my earliest friends; there, and in the neighbouring green lanes, I had wandered in boyhood to enjoy a favourite book, stretched at full length upon the grass, beneath some spreading tree; there, in youth, I had listened to the roar of the ocean, and sought to picture to myself the bright and strange lands lying beyond it, far away in the East, where

"Morning strews the earth with orient pearls."

And now a new idea had introduced itself into my visions. Who was Isis? And why should thoughts of her haunt me perpetually? Some among the learned maintain that she is a personification of the land of Egypt, and that Osiris is the mighty flood which impregnates and renders her

prolific. My conception of her is very different. But it is not here, on the threshold of my pilgrimage, that I should impart it to the reader. In my own mind it was the growth of years, though it only assumed form and consistency when I had sailed for months on the bosom of the broad Nile, acted upon by innumerable influences of earth and sky, and desert and ruin, and religious studies, and historical associations.

III.

No man has ever yet presented to the world a complete picture of his inner life; of what he has thought, projected, hoped, feared, felt, and in the depths of his soul enjoyed. Yet all hold it to be pleasant to obtain glimpses into the sanctuary of other men's conceptions. It is this that constitutes the fascination of books, inspiring us, every time we take up a new volume, with the hope that we shall be able to penetrate further than we had done before into the secrets of human nature, and discover the writer's spirit brooding over the abyss of his ideas and making it pregnant. Nevertheless, all who are of a friendly and ingenuous nature long to make a clean breast of it—

> "To pour out all themselves, as plain
> As downright Shippen, or, as old Montaigne."

But the reserves and courtesies of life interfere, withhold the writer's hand, whisper to him that this reader will be shocked, that the other will be

startled, that one will consider him too frank, that another will accuse him of being wanting in dignity, and that a third, though heartily enjoying his confidence, will shake his head, affect to look grave, and pish and pshaw a great deal, as often as he takes him up in company. Still, the self-revealer must always be agreeable to some, and with the audience made up of these, whether small or great, he should be content.

I would fain hope that they who do me the honour to glance over these pages will have some weaknesses of their own, and be conscious of them, that they may be the readier to pardon mine, among which is a fondness for the remote in place or time, for the indistinct, the shadowy, the wildly fanciful, and perhaps, also, at times, for the supernatural and incredible. Books make up the greater part of the world to the young; and in my own case, Hebrew and Hellenic and Roman antiquity, and the history and traditions of El-Islam, and the narratives of travellers, and the descriptions of poets, combined to invest the land of Nile with an irresistible charm for my imagination.

IV.

We lived on an extremely unfrequented part of the coast of these islands, where, beyond a number of small hills, covered with sedge and constituting a rabbit-warren, stretched a broad expanse of ribbed and yellow sand, thickly strewn with shells,

and covered at high water by the tide. Here, frequently, as I retreated before the rising waves, quivering and glittering in the sun, I used to imagine myself in Egypt. Afterwards, in the solitudes of the Libyan desert, my thoughts often wandered back to that sandy shore which in miniature greatly resembled the wastes of Africa, and imparted to me in youth a tolerably correct idea of them.

V.

Everybody has his favourite season of the year, and autumn is mine. Nature herself seems then to grow sentimental; and to breathe an unimaginable sweetness through the air, slightly akin to melancholy, and begetting infinite musings. The year, with a strong consciousness of the joys and sorrows it has gone through, seems about to doff its vesture and lie down in dumb forgetfulness, with all that have come and gone since the flood; your feelings also mould themselves into harmony with things external, and you love then more than ever to be reminded that you stand on the margin of a boundless ocean, picking up whatever you can of enjoyment, bodily or mental, till one of its great waves, which you have had all along in your eye, comes and swallows you up.

Meantime you endeavour, as I have said, to get some pleasant tastes of life, to hive up in your mind agreeable reminiscences, that, should dark

and cheerless days come on, you may be able to say—

"The joys I have possess'd in spite of fate are mine:
Not heaven itself upon the past has power,
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour."

VI.

If this were an autobiography, and I were compelled to be minute, I should certainly have a great deal to communicate before I could get fairly on shore in Egypt. How, for example, I journeyed to London, how I married and became the father of sons and daughters, how I passed over into France, how I visited Switzerland, Italy, and Greece, and rolled about, listened to stories, and smoked innumerable cigars on the Mediterranean. But this, with more or less completeness, has been described elsewhere. Let me be supposed, therefore, already in the vicinity of the golden coffin in which the ashes of Macedonia's madman were deposited, after he had devastated the half of Asia, and led his bastard republicans to—

"where the gorgeous East
Showers on her kings barbaric pearls and gold."

VII.

The mother of Memnon was already from behind Horeb and Sinai throwing up floods of saffron light into the sky, as I entered the harbour of Alexandria. All around were ships and build-

ings, sand-hills and mounds of rubbish; but everything looks beautiful at a distance, and when the sun rose upon the scene, imparting to each object a brightness which made it seem transparent, I felt that I really was at length in the land of Isis, and that somewhere far away up in the recesses of the valley I might soon hope to stand in the majesty of her countenance, and realize, in part at least, my long remembered vision of Amenti. Meanwhile I was compelled to attend a little to realities. When a ship from Frankestan arrives in an eastern port, the passengers are apt to be astonished, and sometimes, perhaps, a little stunned by the Babel that soon encounters them on the deck.

In the present case the Levant seemed to have deputed a specimen of all its various populations to greet us, Jews and Arabs, Turks and Armenians, Syrians, Parthians, and Elamites, and the dwellers about Mesopotamia. When sitting quietly by my own fireside, I used to fancy myself something of a linguist, but the sounds which now whizzed and bubbled around me were like nothing I had ever heard before;—scraps of Romaic intermingled with fragments of the Lingua Franca,—half sentences in Turkish, interrupted by the louder and more impetuous Arabic,—Hebrew mutterings drowned in the deep gutturals of German, and snatches of the Lingua Tuscana, no longer musical, absorbed and lost in the indescribable utterance of the Sclavonic dialects.

Another circumstance which I would fain pass over, did my reverence for truth permit, was the prevalence of unsavoury odours among this motley group: the sun's rays soon acquired great force, and imparted to every disagreeable scent its utmost development and activity. But the Franks in the Levant, and the lower class of traders even among the Orientals, show little respect for one's sense of smelling, though the refined and polished parts of eastern nations, particularly the women, are as fastidiously clean and delicate as the most scrupulous individuals in the West. Still it is always an unfortunate thing in Africa to possess an intolerant nose, because you can never pass through any town or village without encountering effluvia which remind you strongly of Avernus, whose exhalations killed the very birds which attempted to fly over it.

VIII.

But to escape this topic, I hope the reader is fond of perfumes, since it is a subject on which I could dwell for ever. As I have elsewhere remarked, language is particularly poor in its attempts to classify and describe odours, so that in all likelihood the word sweet awakens extremely different ideas in the minds of different persons. Much in this matter must always depend on association. How, for example, I came to love violets

more than any other flowers, it transcends my philosophy to explain. Possibly it may be because it was the favourite flower of the Athenian people, in whose democratic literature my infancy was cradled. To me, therefore, this little blue denizen of the spring is truly redolent of joy and youth. Paris is famous for its early violets, and whenever the name is mentioned it recals to my mind the laughing physiognomy of a beautiful flower-girl, who once in the month of February stopped me in the Palais Royal—I beg pardon of the Republic—the Palais National—to offer me in exchange for a few sous a nosegay of exquisite violets.

The southern suburbs of London possess also much the same distinction. But here the violets bloom all the summer long—at least I fancy so; and whoever desires to preserve a fragment of Paradise in his imagination should have a thicket of these flowers under his bed-room window. I remember a particular morning in June, when the sun had been shining for some half-hour on the border at the foot of the wall, rising, and throwing up the window-sash, when such a cloud of fragrance entered the room that the air seemed for a moment to be intoxicating. Shakspeare had much the same preference:—

> "Violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath."

Sweeter than Cytherea's breath? No! the most delicate flowers of Eden, nor "Sabæan odours from the spicy shores of Araby the Blest," nor those waters which "roll o'er Elysian flowers their amber streams," are comparable to the breath of her who is Cytherea to you. When a man first lays his head on the bosom of the woman he loves, and feels her breath upon his face, he is encompassed by true airs from heaven. It is this breath filled with love that breathes peace around our cradles. It is the same breath, sanctified and rendered purer by sorrow, that tranquillizes our restless souls on our death-bed, and composes them for the sleep of eternity. No odours, therefore, no scents, no essences, can deserve to be compared with the breath of woman, into which the fragrance of the soul seems to be transfused.

IX.

All this while, however, I am standing on the deck of the "Aquila Nera," longing to descend into a boat and be on shore. I have my carpet-bag in my hand, and seize the first opportunity. The Arabs ply their oars, and in a few minutes I am standing on the soil of the Pharaohs. But I must be honest. Instead of indulging in any flights of imagination, I was impelled by a most ravenous appetite to indulge in a good dinner, and so making the best of my way to that most hospi-

table of all hospitable places, an inn, I was soon perfectly at home in a large, lofty, airy room, filled with Turks, overlooking the Quarantine Harbour.

I am not usually sulky during the last half-hour before dinner, but on this occasion I could not have uttered a syllable, even had there been any one to talk with. Luckily there was no one, and luckily, also, I was not kept waiting half an hour, as there happened to be in the establishment something almost ready, which deserved rather to be called breakfast. If the reader has not tasted kabobs, he should go to Alexandria and eat them, and be as hungry at sitting down to table as I was. How unspiritual we are at such times! When these Oriental delicacies came in, hissing hot, I fancied the greasy Arab who brought them more charming by far than Ganymede or Hebe; and then the coffee! foaming with buffalo's milk,—genuine Mokha, brought overland by the Pilgrim caravan, which, therefore, had not lost one particle of its aroma by the deleterious effects of the sea air.

What are kabobs? Small pieces of delicate mutton, broiled on a skewer till they are all crisp on the outside, and full of juice within; and these, with nice rolls, white as those of Venice, mountains of bananas, and dates fresh from the palm-tree on the edge of the Desert, and pipes with amber mouth-pieces, filled with fragrant gebeli—how could a man have a better welcome to Egypt?

X.

After having done my best with the breakfast and the fruits, I reclined on the divan extending across the window, and went on smoking in silence with more than the phlegm of a Turk from Asia Minor. An extremely narrow beach, not at most above three yards wide, separated the house from the sea, and the tiny waves came rippling in, wetting the long legs of a solitary stork, which appeared to be setting me the example of the perfect ataraxia of the Pyrrhonists. He was a wise and meditative bird, who was obviously taking a survey of life, and enjoying himself in a most rational way, the gentle breeze just fluttering the feathers on his breast, while the sun's rays, falling in dazzling brightness around, made him blink his eyes with pure physical enjoyment. I like the Turks for many things, especially for their partiality to storks, the pious bird which watches over its parents, and must have suggested to Æneas the way he carried Anchises out of burning Troy. That, methinks, was a proud moment for the old man, equal, perhaps, in unadulterated delight, to the one in which he first clasped the divine mother of this pious son in his arms.

There is no feeling in our nature more grateful than the love of children; and when by some

fortunate chance they grow up and find the fitting opportunity of returning it, by bearing us away from death on their shoulders, or watching over our declining years, when the silver cord is well nigh snapped, and the pitcher is about to return broken from the cistern, why then the flood-gates of our inner nature are thrown open, and we become children ourselves in emotion.

The stork looked up at me, and I felt all the inclination in the world to offer him a pipe of gebeli; nothing else seemed wanting to his felicity, and yet he was as solitary as myself. No stork was near to sympathise with him, or to observe how pleasant it was to get one's legs washed by the little cooling waves of the Quarantine Harbour, while shoals of small silver fishes glanced backwards and forwards through the transparent water, making his mind easy respecting futurity by suggesting a recollection of the old proverb, that "there is still corn in Egypt."

XI.

We sometimes seem to fancy that men removed from us by distance must be different in nature from ourselves, especially if they express their ideas by a different set of symbolical sounds, and worship God after a way which is not ours. No mistake can be greater. The animal is the same, whether he wear big breeches or small, hat or

tarboosh, smooth chin or a beard. Neither does it matter much whether his ideas find vent in gutturals or liquids; and provided he worship God at all—which is always a refreshing thing to discover—the mode does not greatly signify.

This reflection was suggested to me by the politeness of a good-natured Osmanli, who, seeing I had no one to converse with, came up to me, Frank and Infidel as I was, and in Italian, not choice, certainly, but intelligible, sought to dissipate my sense of loneliness. He was an old man, and time, I suppose, had taught him the humanities, for he smiled upon me with the most friendly smile, and contrived, somehow, to get up a conversation on a topic always interesting to travellers —I mean, death. How he came to hit upon it I now no longer remember; but he said it was pleasant to die, especially by the sea-shore, where your tomb, being within ear-shot of the waves, would enable you, as you lay there at night, to listen to the everlasting billows, rolling and moaning and chasing each other along the face of the sea.

This led me to inquire about the cemetery of Alexandria, which, he told me, I ought to visit after dark, adding, that as the young moon would shine that evening for at least three-quarters of an hour, he would accompany me to the spot if I pleased. I thankfully accepted his offer, and as soon as the sun had gone down, away we went,

my friendly Muslim and I, through the still crowded streets of the city, to where, out on the solitary beach, the old cemetery exhibited its forest of grave-stones, marble turbans, and Oriental cippi.

XII.

As we approached the necropolis, a picture marvellously different stood out vividly before my mind. It was November, and I imagined my wife and children sitting by their winter fire-side on the slope of the Alps, piling up in the chimney heaps of logs to keep themselves warm, while the glare of the cheerful flames fell on seven little faces, all turned up towards one, while the whisper went round among the group, "I wonder what papa is doing now?" Wanting the excitement of motion, the time already seemed long to them. The snow was falling without, and they fancied, though it was but fancy, they could hear the roar of the avalanche in the distance. If they peeped out of doors, they felt a "nipping and an eager air," and were glad to huddle back again to the chimney-corner, to read wild stories of ghosts and goblins till bed-time. It surpassed their imagination to conceive that papa was just then walking through a balmy atmosphere, warm as that of summer, admiring the brilliant constellations and the sharp silver crescent floating lovingly through the sky.

XIII.

When we had reached the place of tombs, we by instinct lowered our voices, as though we might otherwise disturb those who slept so tranquilly around. All men feel the fascination and mystery of death. All regard the tomb as a dark and narrow portal opening upon another world. With some it is invested with the mists of scepticism; and there are those who would fain persuade themselves the torch of life is extinguished in a sea of darkness and forgetfulness, which no ray of consciousness ever traverses. As Sancho Panza says, "God understands this, though I don't." It can meanwhile do me no harm to believe, as I do, that death is the beginning of life; that the soul, freed from its clay tenement, is wafted away into an expanse of luminous ether, where, without any oblivion of the past, it communes joyously with the infinite, and is absorbed in everlasting contentment.

On this point the Osmanli and I agreed exactly; that is, I mean, on the existence of a sunny region after death; but while, in conformity with European notions, I sought to represent it to myself as a place of metaphysical speculation, he imagined that the soul would carry over the narrow bridge all its passions along with it, though exalted and purified, and that its bliss would principally consist

in living among the daughters of Paradise, listening to the music of their voices and intoxicated by their love.

Far and near the moonlight fell on the white stones, the cypresses shook their foliage in the night breeze, the owl, perched on some distant minaret, hooted loudly, and the Mediterranean, though invisible, sent up the voice of its multitudinous waves in the distance. The reader's fancy will, I hope, assist mine in making out the picture. Between the tombs and grave-stones the soil was sandy, consequently unfavourable to luxuriant vegetation; yet a number of creeping plants stretched their net-work about the graves, as if to defend from the sun by day and the moon by night the ashes of brave men and lovely women, which lay below awaiting the general resurrection. Once I heard the stealthy footstep of the jackal, and saw his sharp ears pricking up from behind a mouldering stone. It was just at that moment that the Turk stopped, and bade me examine two tombs altogether different from the rest, which, upon looking near, I found inscribed with European characters, but so defaced by time, that the moon's dim light would not enable me to decipher them. "Those monuments," observed my companion, "are connected with a sad story, by no means creditable to the disciples of El-Islam." I begged him to relate it. Consenting very readily, he turned to his slave, and

ordered him to unfold his prayer-carpet and spread it on the ground, and fill and kindle our pipes. We then seated ourselves in the Eastern fashion and began smoking, while he entered upon his story as follows :—

XIV.

" Several ages ago there arrived at Alexandria three Englishmen, a father and son,—a youth about seventeen,—and a man in the prime of life. They had many servants and much wealth, and lived so happily together that they appeared to be animated by one soul. The youth was so beautiful that he seemed to many to be a woman in disguise, though the strong likeness between him and his father left no doubt of their relationship. Strange to say, the friend also partook of the same beauty, so that they were the wonder of the city, and the people, as they passed, stood still to look at them, and whispered, ' those are the handsome strangers,' and they brought their women to the lattices to show them their features, and all agreed it was a pity that persons with an exterior so agreeable should not be believers in the Book and reckoned among the children of the Prophet.

" With what view they travelled was not known. They held no communication with the Beys, whom, when they met them in the street, they treated with distant courtesy. They were not merchants ;

they neither bought nor sold; they brought along with them their provisions, and appeared to be men apart, eating and drinking differently from the rest of the world, neither making use of coffee, nor smoking the shibouk or the shishé, but subsisting in a way difficult to be conjectured by the inhabitants of the city. On this account they were objects of great curiosity, and crowds generally followed them wherever they went.

"Early one morning a troop of Bedouins from the Western Desert, mounted on superb horses, and with long spears in their hands, made their appearance before the door of the caravanserai in which the strangers lived, and immediately after left the city, with the travellers, likewise mounted, in the midst of them, and bent their way towards the West. Some few of the inhabitants showed an inclination to follow, but the Bedouins drove them back, swearing they would defile their beards and the beards of their fathers if they dared to set their feet beyond the walls of the city. Neither were the servants of the Franks permitted to accompany them. Those three, therefore, without attendance or followers, save the fierce horsemen of the Desert, quitted Alexandria, proceeding no one knew whither, and for purposes it was impossible to comprehend.

"From that day months and years elapsed and they returned not. Their domestics tarried for them a considerable time, but at length collected

together what remained of their property, and going on board some ship bound for Frankestan, sailed away, bearing to their friends at home tidings of the sad and mysterious calamity which had happened to their masters.

XV.

" By degrees, however, the truth came to light. It seems that on quitting the city, the Bedouins conducted the travellers, in conformity with their desire, to the catacombs, those subterraneous palaces in which the Kafirs of the time of old deposited their dead. The entrance to these mighty ranges of chambers, and halls, and corridors, and galleries, is now through a lofty portal opening upon the sea, but this had not then been discovered, and the only means of descending into those ancient places of burial, was by a small square aperture in the rock, through which the Bedouins pushed down a ladder barely strong enough to support a single person.

" After skirting for about an hour the shore of the Mediterranean, they arrived at the mysterious structures excavated beneath the earth, and one of the Bedouins having descended first, the three strangers followed, with other Arabs bearing torches, who were to serve as guides. At the time of which I speak, the vaults of the catacombs had been little explored. There was great danger

of being lost in these subterranean excavations, which extend in various directions to an unknown distance beneath the Desert. Some pretend that they communicate with the tombs of Memphis, and it is certain that, though persons have proceeded for many miles through a succession of halls and chambers, they have never found any termination to them, and have returned in great terror lest they should drop suddenly into some abyss, or be lost in the multiplicity of windings and turnings, and perish there miserably in darkness.

"When the strangers had satisfied their curiosity, they returned and sat down on a stone coffin in the great circular hall, where the guides demanded from them an enormous sum, affirming that they should never emerge to the light of day till it was paid. The strangers, with the haughtiness of men accustomed to command, treated their menaces with contempt, observing that they had travelled over a great portion of the world, and had never yielded up anything through fear. The sum agreed upon at Alexandria they were ready to pay, together with the small presents usual on such occasions. The guides said they would consult the sheikh, and for this purpose went away, leaving them in the hall, with a single torch which they had stuck in a heap of dust. At first the conversation of the travellers turned on the insolence and

injustice of the Bedouins, of whom they spoke in terms of great severity, censuring them for their attempted extortion and their bad faith, the sum they were to pay having been fixed in the morning before setting out.

XVI.

"The men not soon returning, they became impatient, especially as the torch began to burn low. Taking it up, therefore, they proceeded in search of the guides, who were nowhere to be found. An uneasy feeling now took possession of their minds. Did the wretches intend to leave them there to perish, or was it only a trick resorted to for the purpose of extortion? Of the way towards the aperture they were completely ignorant, and their torch was fast approaching extinction. They cast on each other a look of consultation. What was to be done? If left in darkness they might never be able to find their way to where the ladder, they could not doubt, would be left for them; the torch now flickered violently, sent up one expiring blaze, and they were left in utter darkness.

"Brave and intrepid as they were, they could not help experiencing a pang of anguish, especially the father, who speaking gently to his son, bade him keep fast hold of his arm, that they might not by any chance be separated. To his brother,

also, for that was the relation in which he stood to his other companion, he addressed the same counsel in different words, and they proceeded, feeling their way, but often striking against the rocky walls in the unmitigated darkness which surrounded them.

" Once or twice a sound as of voices came to their ears. Was it the whispering of their treacherous guides lying somewhere concealed to watch their movements, or the moaning of the wind, or the suppressed growl of wild beasts, following at their heels and ready to spring upon them? They stopped and listened. Almost any indication of neighbouring life or motion would have been more welcome than the stillness and silence encircling them. In the sepulchre they were, and the fear came into their minds that it might prove their own. Yet their strength being unimpaired, they persevered in their haphazard exploration, and towards evening succeeded in reaching the opening through which they had descended into the catacombs.

XVII.

" At first their joy was great. But observing that the ladder had been withdrawn, and that although they shouted, threatened, and entreated, no voice answered them, they began to be alarmed. The father's eye glancing over his son's face, per-

ceived that it was calm and proud, though its beauty had been perhaps somewhat lighted up by resentment. His brother, a man of about thirty years of age, looked fierce and indignant, as if it would have rejoiced him at the moment to grapple with the whole troop of Bedouins, and throttle them by way of quenching his rage. They then sat down upon a stone; the eyes of all three turned up towards the aperture, about thirty feet above their heads, expecting every moment the dusky face of some Bedouin to appear to offer them release for a heavy ransom.

"Money works wonders among mankind, and the thought now and then flitted across their minds that they had forfeited their lives to preserve it. They had about them a quantity of gold and jewels, and as hunger began to make itself felt, would have given no inconsiderable portion of it for a loaf of bread. Night at length came on, and as a small patch of sky was visible through the opening in the rock, they sought to allay their mental perturbation by gazing up at the eternal calm of the stars, that, marching everlastingly through space, disappeared one after another before the mouth of their prison, informing them that time was moving, which also they knew by the increasing keenness of their appetite.

"Despairing of assistance, at least till the following day, they endeavoured to effect their

escape by feeling for projections in the rock, by the help of which they might ascend. But it was smooth and slippery, retreating inwards below, and presenting no fissure or inequality which would enable them to climb its surface. The father then proposed that his younger brother should mount upon his shoulders, and the youth upon his, and thus, if possible, reach the opening, emerge into the Desert, and make his way to Alexandria to demand succour from the Memluk Beys. But the design was found impracticable, as there still remained twelve or fourteen feet of bare rock above his head; so he descended, and they sat down and again looked at the stars, and waited eagerly for morning.

XVIII.

"Dawn came, the sun rose, and the joyous light of day penetrated through the narrow opening into the catacomb, kindling up its dull, damp air, for a considerable distance inwards. Hoping that some wandering Arab might pass near the spot, they lifted up their voices and shouted aloud; for they knew the language of the Faithful, and could make themselves understood by any inhabitant of desert or city. No reply came to them but that rendered by echo, which shouted when they shouted, threatened when they threatened, entreated when they entreated, and

then lapsed again into silence, concealing herself like a spirit in the dark recesses of the rock.

"Thus passed the second day and the second night; and on the third morning a great change was visible in all, but especially in the youth, who began to totter through weakness, while the muscles of his countenance collapsed, and the inward gnawing of hunger and thirst sent a fierce glare into his eyes. The father's portion of suffering was double, as in addition to his own sensations, he felt those also of his son. The brother, a strong man in the full vigour of life, still bore, without a single murmur, the tortures preying upon him from within. He felt like the hyæna of the desert, but he had command over himself, and would not heighten his elder brother's sorrow by a single gesture or word. While they were in this state of mind, a bread-basket was suddenly flung in at the aperture. They seized upon it and opened it, but excepting a few crumbs it contained nothing. The incident, however, inspired them with fresh hope, since it proved that the Bedouins were not totally unmindful of their condition. Ready now to sacrifice gold and jewels, as men at sea throw overboard the cargo to save a sinking ship, and not doubting there were persons within hearing, they offered to heap riches on the man who would bring them a ladder and deliver them from their fearful imprisonment. They, besides, appealed to the

humanity and religion of those who might be listening, and entreated them for the love of God to show mercy and compassion. But in vain. Nothing could be heard without, but the voice of the sea-breeze whirling about the loose sand, or sinking or sighing through crannies in the rock. Finding all efforts useless, and growing every moment feebler and more dejected, they again relapsed into silence.

"The father now sat down on the ground, and his son, who began to be faint for want of sustenance, leaned his head upon his breast. It was, as I have said, almost like the head of a woman. Long ringlets of soft hair clustered about his countenance in profusion, and descended to the neck, and as the father gazed upon his cheeks and drooping eyelids, tears, which had hitherto refused their relief, came abundantly and fell upon his face like rain. It was, however, nothing palpable to his senses that occasioned the first gush of those tears. He thought on the mother of that boy, fairer by far and more beautiful than he. He figured her to his mind's eye, sitting tranquilly by their hearth at home, with a baby on her knee, to which, perhaps, in the wild thoughtlessness of affection, she might at that moment be speaking of them; and there lay his boy, his first-born, the pride of his house, the hoped-for pillar and support of his family, and what was more than all, the image of his mother, dying in his arms.

"The youth's brain now beginning to be bewildered, he looked up into his father's face and asked him for a drop of water, saying he was all on fire within, and that it was very cruel to let him perish of thirst. Could it have preserved the life cased in that beautiful tenement, the father would have changed his own blood into water and given him to drink. Brief was the interchange of words between them, but into it was infused all the agonizing love of years. The father did not rave, neither did he blaspheme, but he turned up eyes of entreaty towards heaven, and besought of God that he would visit him first with death, that he might not witness the departure of the spirit from his son. He was a man who in the world was accounted proud, haughty, nay, even, perhaps, cold. But the habit of reining in the feelings does not annihilate them, and there is no means known to human nature of eradicating from a father's heart the natural yearning for his offspring. It is a part of himself, a part of his soul, rendered holier and dearer in his eyes, by having been mingled with another's being, with which the love of self is as nothing in comparison.

XIX.

"The youth's lips were feverish, parched, and pale, and lying slightly open, the breath came forth between them heated almost like that of a furnace. Language would fail to describe the agonies he

endured, in which he clung to his father, as though in his arms there was some power to cool him and assuage his sufferings. They appealed to heaven, but the blue ether returned no answer. The thought, however, passed over the soul of both father and son that the smile worn night and day by that infinite expanse, was intended to signify to them that as soon as their brief struggle should be over, it was ready to receive them into everlasting peace and tranquillity.

"The brother, whose fiery and restless nature would not suffer him to be still, paced to and fro—now pausing to gaze on the fearful group, composed of his dearest kindred,—now turning away in maddening grief. He could not, however, even yet believe that the Bedouins would suffer them to die. In his opinion they would come before the last moment to bring them food and rescue them, if not for pity, at least for gold. It never occurred to him that when death should have done its work, it would be easy for the miscreants to descend into the catacombs and possess themselves of all the wealth they bore about them. But hope deludes us, not merely in such circumstances, but in all. It is often the only friend of the afflicted, and when we enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, it clings lovingly to our side, and whispers that even there the means of prolonging existence are found, by passing entirely out of self, and becoming absorbed in the bosom of the Eternal Spirit.

XX.

"If you have ever watched beside the death-bed of any beloved individual, you will remember how vain have then seemed to you all the riches and pleasures of this world, and how willing you would be to relinquish them all to purchase a prolongation of existence for the object of your affection. The father now felt, however, as he bent over his child, that by the sacrifice of a little perishable wealth he might have preserved his own life and his. But could he certainly have known that the guides would abandon them in so barbarous a manner? Would any man have believed it possible? He expressed his self-accusations to his brother, who, with the stoicism of indomitable pride, answered that he was blameless: that it was to gratify some other malignant passion that the Bedouins had thus abandoned them; but added, that even now he felt persuaded they would return and deliver them, and not be guilty of a crime as much at variance with the principles of El-Islam, as with those of their own faith.

"The youth, meanwhile, drooped more and more every hour, and at length the mysterious dews of death wrung from our organization by extreme agony, stood thick upon his brow—his eyes became glassy—his cheeks cold and pale—he gasped for breath—he gave one convulsive shudder, and then, opening wide his eyes, recovering for a moment

the power of vision, cast a look of ineffable love and gratitude on his father's face, and murmuring his name softly, together with that of his mother, his youthful spirit passed away. Calm and beautiful seemed his countenance in death, which had obliterated, as it were, his kindred to man, and given him an aspect altogether feminine. All heaven's serenity appeared to have alighted on his features, the traces of pain were gone, and the seraphic beauty of eternity, the unutterable tranquillity that broods over our existence beyond the grave, descended upon them, never more to depart. His ashes might mingle with the dust of the earth, or be dispersed by the winds, but until this final separation should take place, nothing could disturb the repose of his form.

"The cup of the father's grief was now full, though instead of overflowing externally in tears and lamentations, it ran in upon the heart and burst it. He did not survive his son a single hour. Forgetting up to the last moment everything outward, he clasped his son's dead body in his arms, his brother standing beside and looking on. When he felt that his spirit was about to follow that of his child, he bent his head against his brother, who now sat beside him in the dust, and whispered:—'Tell her, if you escape, that my last thoughts were of her!'

XXI.

"The strong man now remained alone with the dead; refusing, however, internally to believe it would be his fate to join them. He still felt inexhaustible energy in his frame. His passions raged with unabated fierceness, and he persuaded himself the duty would yet devolve on him of punishing the murderers of his friends. Night came on with its cool breezes, and the corpses lay beside him. While they were living and suffering he sympathized deeply with them; but now that the spirit and the flesh were separated, in spite of the strength of his philosophy, he could not regard their clay without an emotion of terror.

"What is it that makes us fear the dead? Is it the change from motion to stillness—from speech to silence—from affliction and suffering to eternal rest? With the spirit embodied we can hold converse, but with the act of quitting its dwelling, it may, for aught we know, acquire other feelings, other propensities, other passions and dispositions, and from having been all we loved, become all we hate. There is a mystery in death which defies our scrutiny. Its imperturbable calm, acquired suddenly in exchange for agony, mocks our sympathy. It has put on the aspect of nature herself; and sorrow, and sin, and shame vex it no more. There it lies—majestic as a god, terrible as

Hades, inscrutable as eternity; and then its beauty, —is it not something bewildering?

"All this and more the stranger felt as he sat beside the bodies of his kindred, sometimes casting down his eyes on the dusky and motionless masses, and sometimes looking upwards at the stars. Towards morning he thought he heard a slight sound above, near the aperture, and raising his head, beheld a small jar of water pass over the rim of the rock, and lowering itself gradually by a cord. He sprang to seize it as it descended, and detached the cord, which was immediately drawn up. Presently a roll of thin cakes was let down in the same manner, after which a head appeared at the opening, and he heard these words uttered in a female voice: 'Be of good comfort, strangers; I have been informed of your captivity, and will effect your deliverance.' Before he could reply, the woman had disappeared; he saw nothing more of her that day, but ate the bread and drank the water, bitterly regretting as he did so that his deliverer had not sooner learnt their condition; but he acquiesced in the decrees of God, and waited impatiently for the coming night. About the same hour a fresh supply of bread and water was renewed, with a brief assurance that deliverance was at hand. On the third night a ladder was let down, and with a mixture of rage and gratitude he rushed upwards along it. There, standing alone upon the sand, he beheld a gentle Bedouin girl, who asked him if his

companions were not about to follow. He then disclosed to her the truth, at which she appeared to be as much grieved as if she had slain them herself. The explanation she gave, however, was, that she had only heard of their captivity on the very night of her first visit. The stranger then folded her in his arms, and they both disappeared across the plain.

XXII.

"In a few days the number of the Memluk Beys was increased, and a new palace in the neighbourhood of the old harbour received inhabitants. The two tombs by which we are now sitting arose by night in the cemetery. For many months nothing new or strange occurred at Alexandria, but on the setting in of winter a large body of horse was observed to leave the city by night. What direction they took was never known. Much firing was, indeed, heard to the west, beyond the Necropolis, after which the tents of the tribe which had formerly encamped near the catacombs were seen no more.

"Whether their owners betook themselves to the distant desert, and lived in concealment there, or whether tents, men, and horses were hurled into the sea, remains an enigma to this hour. But the strange Bey rose to eminence among his brethren, and is said never to have possessed more than one Bedouin wife, whom he associated in his greatness

and by whom he had many children, and from one of these the man who now relates to you the circumstances of his elevation is descended. I may say, therefore, that I am, in some sort, an Englishman, and claim kindred with these tombs. But whatever may have been the faith of my bold and daring forefather from the West, I have been brought up in the doctrines of El-Islam, and though tolerant towards others, must repeat to you my belief,—that there is no god but God, and that Mohammed is the Prophet of God."

XXIII.

One of the unpleasant things you have to put up with in travelling, is the falling away from about you, at particular points of your journey, of the companions who had accompanied you, perhaps, for weeks, or months, and come almost to be regarded in the light of friends. If the reader be a person of robust mental constitution, it will probably not elevate me in his esteem to confess that I generally feel much pain at such moments. On arriving at Alexandria, the men with whom I had crossed the Mediterranean all separated, and went different ways: the Bey departed to the Delta; the Neapolitan betook himself immediately to buying and selling; my countryman set out for India, and the others went to the houses of their friends who were ready to receive them.

I now, therefore, felt myself a stranger in a strange land. The old familiar faces had vanished from beside me, the voices to which I had been accustomed were no more heard; and as I lifted the mosquito curtains, and slipped stealthily into bed, lest the enemy should enter with me, I could not help indulging in some reflections which were anything but cheerful. A servant soon came to fetch away the lamp, and I felt less lonely after its departure; for the light only helped to reveal the outlandish features of the apartment: the iron bedstead, the oriental nakedness of the room, the little fantastic tables, and my own carpet-bag in the corner, containing my wardrobe and my library —that is to say, a certain number of shirts, "Paradise Lost," and the New Testament. But, though alone, was I unhappy? Not for many minutes. I felt the pleasure of lying on the solid earth, after having been rocked about for several weeks on a few planks at sea; and this earth was Egypt, and the air that breathed balmily into the room came from the Nile,—and my dream of Isis was beginning to be accomplished.

XXIV.

The sea and I were now once more on friendly terms, and after lying and tossing about for an hour or so, I ventured, in spite of the mosquitoes, to lift the curtains, and step out to lean on the

window-sill, and gaze at the Mediterranean. Describe the ideas which then thronged through my mind I cannot. In many respects I may be said to live very much in the past,—I mean the far past, when the children of Hellas, and after them, the Romans, speculated, triumphed, and civilized themselves on the borders of that mighty lake. Somewhere on the sandy shore extending on the right towards Canopus, Proteus assumed an infinity of shapes, to baffle the curiosity of Menelaus. According to some traditions, Helen's graceful feet had been there also, while her face, the kindler of love, beamed like a star upon the scene. But, beautiful as she was, Chronos had now devoured her with his other children. Her loveliness had been engulfed in darkness, her very name become a myth, while the poet who celebrated her charms is himself almost abandoned to pedants and schoolboys.

A later form of beauty had likewise glided like a meteor over those star-lit strands, exciting the admiration of a less poetical world;—I mean, the lady of many tongues—the serpent of old Nile, who put one of the brood, like a baby, to her breast, and was sucked by it into everlasting repose.

With these two, but far above them, came the fabulous queen, the ideal of womanhood, the spirit of love worshipped under various names throughout the world,—Bhavani, Astarte, Artemis, the huntress

with the silver bow, the creator of night's beauty and of half the poetry of the world,—Isis, whose mysterious name once filled the valley like a hum of music, and daily caused millions of hearts to leap for joy.

May I, after this, venture to mention another of the sex, who came down into Egypt, bearing with her a little child,—who, with that child on her lap, rested beneath the sycamore at Heliopolis,—who drank of the fountain hard by, though she bore with her the Giver of those living waters, which whoever drinketh shall thirst no more? To the imagination, however modified, Egypt is hallowed ground.

XXV.

And now, as these thoughts flashed across my mind, the breeze, rolling the little waves westward from Canopus, conducted them, to break with tiny murmurs, beneath my window,—billow after billow crested with snowy foam, and flashing like liquid pearls in the starlight.

However, it is not the place that imparts ideas to you, but you who impart meaning to the place. We have mapped out the world, and peopled every spot with associations which render it significant and beautiful to our minds. The entire globe may be said to float in an atmosphere of human thought, which invests it for us with a brightness greater than that of Sirius or Orion. Huge as it is, our

imagination, still more vast, hugs in its arms our beloved planet like a plaything, and would not exchange it for the most glowing star that illumines the face of heaven.

XXVI.

The English at Alexandria, whatever they may be elsewhere, are a hospitable people. I had brought letters with me for persons who just then happened to be absent; but this did not signify. I was invited out right and left, and could I have dined seven times a-day, I should scarcely have been able to satisfy those magnificent Franks, who used the Spanish phrase, and meant it, when they assured me that their house was my own—that is, for as long as I chose to stay. To mention individual examples, where all held out the hand of welcome, would be injustice. But there was one merchant with an Oriental harim, who, with the women of the East, seemed to have inherited the soul of the kaliphs; for his door was ever open, his coffee always smoking, his amber-headed pipes ever filled. You had but to walk in, take your place on the divan, clap your hands, and one of the children of the Faithful immediately presented himself, to kindle your pipe and pour out your coffee.

Through the intervention of this Barmecide of the West, I became acquainted with Vere, my

companion up the river, the projector of many travels with me, and always my steady friend, till the terminator of delights and separator of companions put a period to our intimacy. He was at this time one of the most comical-looking fellows in the world: tall as Don Quixote, and every whit as lean, with the fearful marks upon his face of recent small-pox, by which he had nearly lost his life in the Lazaretto. He looked as red all over as a new-born infant, and his hair and whiskers, of the richest carrot, were clipped as short as if he had been confined for a month in the Penitentiary. Add to this, that he wore a white jacket and trousers, a check handkerchief about his neck, and upon his head a broad-brimmed straw sailor's hat, which had cost him a shilling at Malta.

It may be thought that I intend in this description to caricature my friend; but this is by no means the case. He was at the moment a living caricature, rueful in look as the knight of La Mancha, with light blue eyes—then cold and spiritless—a large acquiline nose, and cheeks so thin and hollow, that you might have hidden an apple-dumpling in each of them, without exaggerating the general contour. But the moment he opened his mouth, you felt that you were in the company of a gentleman and a scholar. His voice was pleasant and friendly, and his manner indicative of that quality which, by a very significant name, we call heartiness in England; and however

unpromising may have been his outside, he really had a heart in his breast, rather given, perhaps, to conceal its emotions, but naturally warm, nevertheless, and inspired with a double amount of kindness and humanity by the spirit of that faith, of which, whatever may be thought of the matter, he was a teacher.

We afterwards met in England, when he welcomed me to his parsonage with the Oriental salutation, "Salāam alikúm," or, "Peace be with you;" and I replied in the same language, "Alikúm salāam,"—"And with you be peace." When he ascended the pulpit, all the atmosphere of the Nile seemed to breathe around him. Our very dinners and suppers were involuntarily remembered with the temples of Karnak and Luxor, and the Memnonium, and the Pyramids, and the tomb of him who sleeps in Philæ.

XXVII.

But this is travelling strangely out of the record. Let me return to the merchant's divan, where we were first introduced, and discussed, in a manner at once amicable and confidential, our plan of travelling together to the borders of Ethiopia, where the Nile, descending from the table-land of the Desert, rushes foaming between ten thousand islands of green and red porphyry.

Vere, in deference to the world, affected to be altogether without enthusiasm; and it was cer-

tainly not his weak point. What he chiefly liked was laughter and merriment, though when fresh from Lazaretto, he found it extremely difficult to accommodate his lips to a smile. He had, perhaps, been as near death as a man could be, and escape after all; and a month's intimacy with the King of Terrors tends considerably to make a man sober. At any rate, this was the effect it had on Vere. He did laugh a little, but indulged in it, as it were, by stealth, and under the impression that there was some fearful Nemesis watching over him,—as indeed there was,—to strike at his mirth in its culminating point, and bring him down suddenly, with all his smiles, to the grave.

We were on the best possible footing at once. Properly speaking, it was Herodotus who introduced us, for whom the merchant only acted as a sort of *locum tenens*. We began to talk of the *Euterpe*, and of the pleasure we should have in converting it into a sort of manual as we went up the river, comparing it at every step with Diodorus, Strabo, Plutarch, and the thousand and one travellers whom modern times have sent forth to gather golden fruit in the gardens of the Hesperides.

XXVIII.

It may gratify some to discover sources of vulgarity everywhere. I love as much as any one what is of every day occurrence,—delight to behold

the common people enjoying mirth and comfort, and adding to these political rights, with some slight insight into philosophy. But I do not associate the idea of vulgarity with such things. On the contrary, nothing seems to me so fraught with interest as that which regards the happiness of the multitude,—an emotion born at once in ten thousand hearts,—an idea, shedding light over ten thousand minds,—are for me, by those very circumstances, invested with grandeur.

But there are functions of our animal life which it is impossible to dissociate from comedy. Two centuries ago a traveller would have affected little reserve,—I will not say that "La pudeur c'est envolée de nos cœurs pour se réfugier sur nos lèvres." But our language now abounds with forms and circumlocutions unknown to our ancestors. If the reader will imagine all the walls, screens, and contrivances, invented and set up by civilization to conceal the domestic operations of individuals from each other, suddenly, by some potent effect of magic, thrown down, while everybody proceeds with what he is about as if he were in perfect seclusion, some idea may be formed of what one witnesses in Alexandria. Those disciples of El-Islam may be more philosophical than we,—they certainly have a much greater contempt for appearances, and probably think that in the mouths of many witnesses all the important acts of human life should be established. They converse, they eat, they drink, they

sleep, and do several other things, elsewhere carefully concealed, almost, it may be said, in public.

In consequence, perhaps, of the extreme simplicity of these children of Hagar, I immediately took a liking to them; and the good feeling was mutual, for they also treated me like one of themselves, admitted me into their mosques and tombs, smoked with me, chatted with me, brought their little children to me to gratify my paternal instincts, and acted altogether with a freedom from prejudice and bigotry, that would have done honour to nations much better furnished with the conveniences of life. They found something in me with which they could sympathise. Some of us preserve much better than others the traditions of barbarism, and from the facility with which I glide into the habits of half-civilized people, I have always suspected myself of retaining much more of the barbarian in me than my neighbours.

At all events, certain it is, that I like the Arabs, which the reader will be so good as to bear in mind when weighing my testimony in their favour. It is not the testimony of an impartial person; it is the testimony of a man, who constantly, during a long period, received favours, kindnesses, and benefits at their hands, and who, therefore, cannot be expected to speak of them with complete indifference. My remarks, however, apply exclusively to the Muslim part of the population, with whom alone I associated. What

faults I found in them I shall notice as I go along, but with no inclination to exaggerate, or, indeed, to represent them otherwise than they were. They can bear to have the truth spoken of them, and yet vindicate to themselves a place in the respect of all unprejudiced persons.

XXIX.

Travellers rarely turn aside from contemplating the grandeur of ancient ruins, characterising the civilization of a people now no more, to investigate the condition of the poor in Egypt. But to me, of all ruins, those most deeply fraught with interest are the ruins of the works of God, which in all forms of society meet our eyes at every step.

What man was originally designed to be, He who designed and created him only knows. What he is, we feel and know but too well. With thoughts which seem naturally to mount upwards; with a soul capable of grasping the whole system of created things; with traditions of angelical purity and glory; with historical associations, scarcely less exalted or divine than his original nature; with hopes which connect him indissolubly with eternity, and place him on a spiritual eminence, where his face may be for ever illuminated by the face of God; with all this profusion of wealth in memory and prospect, what, in nearly all countries and stations, is Man?

My heart was contracted with sorrow as I passed up and down the Valley of the Nile, and beheld millions of my brethren, deserving, at least as well as I, to enjoy a better lot, oppressed by indigence, and struggling with all the worst ills that flesh is heir to. It is easy with petulant arrogance to arraign their eternal petitioning, to say that the word "give" is never out of their mouths, and to wrap oneself in the mantle of contempt, and spurn them from our presence as things too vile to hold fellowship with.

I own I have felt ashamed in Egypt, as elsewhere, to behold my brothers and sisters—for we were all fashioned more or less directly in the womb of Eve—stand trembling with solicitude and anxiety before me, and asking me for a morsel of bread. The word "no," which necessity too frequently compelled me to pronounce, stuck in my throat. I asked myself, what right have I to have bread, while these dear creatures, who have done nothing to be excluded from Nature's table, crouch emaciated and shivering there for want?

XXX.

I remember at Thebes, while sitting one day on a fallen pillar in the Memnonium, a number of little girls, from the neighbouring village, came, after the manner of the East, to ask me for something. The aspect of my Frankish physiognomy, looking upon which they could not, I suppose,

decide whether it boded them well or ill, probably rendered them timid. At length, however, gaining courage from familiarity, they drew near, and half surrounding me with a semi-circle of little faces, exclaimed: "Oh Merchant! give us a present!"

The word merchant, be it observed, was the most respectable in their vocabulary. With Pashas, Beys, and Effendis they were unacquainted. But the commercial apostle of civilization had visited them in their obscurity, and by charity and generosity impressed their minds with reverence for his character. Therefore it was, that they called me merchant, supposing I should be pleased with the appellation, and, perhaps, flattered into beneficence.

When I rose to take the scrip of Mammon from my pocket, the little creatures fell back, and stood at a safer distance, not being perfectly satisfied in their minds whether they ought to regard me as a good or evil genius. But when I held out my hand, the attraction was too powerful. They rushed forward, and seizing indiscriminately piastres and paras, made off with them to their mothers, uttering, however, as they went away, showers of blessings on the stranger. How cheaply may the good-will of the poor be purchased!

Among the least of the children, there was one modest and delicate little girl, who, before she touched the money, gazed in my face, and muttering the name of God, kissed my hand. She then retired slowly after her companions, looking back

from time to time over her shoulder. It should be observed, that they probably took me for a Muslim, though the frequent visits of travellers from the north, had made the inhabitants of Thebes familiar with the appearance of an unbeliever.

I may doubtless, on this subject, have been misled by the difficulty of projecting my thoughts into the sphere of ideas prevalent among the natives; but the notion occurred to me frequently, that the Muslims are not so completely degraded by poverty as the indigent in Christian countries. Possibly the belief in fatality may tend to produce this effect. If they are cold and hungry, and have not where to lay their heads, they sit down upon the ground and say: "God is great! He has decreed this! Let me take this stone for my pillow, remain here and wait his pleasure, for verily He is compassionate and merciful."

And who knows what thoughts visit the poor man as he lies stretched upon the sand, houseless, friendless—as far, I mean, as the friends of this world are concerned. However we may explain it, moreover, it is a fact that the imagination of the Orientals is a mine of happiness to them. Riches, according to their belief, lie scattered everywhere through the bowels of the earth, and may, at any instant, be revealed or brought up to them by some benevolent jinneh, touched with compassion by their misfortunes. They have also seen by experience, that wealth makes itself wings,

and flies whithersoever it pleases, alighting sometimes in the hovel, and brightening the faces of its inmates, and diffusing joy and contentment where previously there was nothing but sorrow.

Still, the reality of poverty causes itself to be keenly felt in Egypt, and every day as I witnessed it, I saw the necessity of a great reformation in civil society. To effect the deliverance of the poor, we must instruct them in the doctrine of equality, without a sincere belief in which, the condition of man can never be greatly ameliorated. This is the fundamental principle of human salvation; confining our views to political affairs, and wherever real Christianity penetrates, this must be its passport into the hearts of the people. Christianity means equality, and all attempts at disproving their identity, are treason against human happiness. If we are brothers, if we call one being Father, who will dare to teach that one man should riot in boundless profusion and luxury, while at the distance, perhaps, of a few yards, the children of our common mother lie famishing in some loathsome dungeon on a bed of straw?

XXXI.

Having had my lot cast in an utilitarian age, I am of course compelled to pay some degree of respect to things useful; but nothing forbids our mixing up, when we can, the *dulce* with the *utile*.

I undertook my pilgrimage in quest of solid knowledge, which might enable me to reason with some effect on liberty and despotism, on sultans and pashas, and analogous personages in Europe. But there were other points of curiosity to which I likewise directed my attention, and it is on these that I chiefly design to dwell at present. My friend Vere took very little interest in politics, but a great deal in antiquities, especially when encircled by classical associations.

On the sands near Alexandria, there is occasionally picked up a beautiful small shell called Venus's Nipple. Few travellers have seen it, and not many can be said to be aware of its existence. Vere and I, however, having gone out in search of this shell, amused ourselves for a while by watching the waves coming in quivering and glittering, and breaking with a gentle splash upon the beach. Our search was unpropitious, for Aphrodite that day hid her beauty from us; we were rewarded, nevertheless, for our walk by inhaling the sea-breeze, and watching the innumerable aquatic birds as they whirled and screamed in the golden sunshine over our heads. Though not averse from society, I at times delight in solitude, especially in wild and desolate places, where nature wears an aspect of grandeur, which fills, dilates, and elevates the soul. Something, also, in such cases, depends on the quality of the air, and its effect upon the body, which, in this sublunary sphere, influences

the condition of its spiritual helpmate, more than, with all our philosophy, we can imagine.

XXXII.

It happened on the morning in which we took it into our heads to be students of conchology, that the north wind was blowing across the Mediterranean, not after the fashion affected by Boreas in our latitudes, but balmily, gently, like the west wind in summer. Still, wherever it blows, it produces an invigorating effect on the frame. It comes laden, as it were, with health and animal spirits; and when every object in nature around you seems in unison with it, it would be next to impossible to resist its influence. On the left lay the skirt of the Libyan Desert, with its mounds of warm shifting sand, stretching away interminably towards the south, interspersed with rocks and glittering like beds of gold-dust in the sun. On the right was the sea, which breaking incessantly against the low, rocky, honey-combed shore, fell back in fine spray, making a ceaseless noise, not a roar or a murmur, but a prolonged liquid dash, as the surge went on, coming successively into contact with an immense stretch of coast, one part after another. Over head was the morning sun, and a sky of azure, dotted with patches of silver vapour, which moved through the firmament like flights of white ibises.

But after all, perhaps, the colouring of the scene came from within. I seemed to be moving through an ocean of invisible champagne, which intoxicated me as I inhaled it. We spoke very little, being both, I suppose, too happy for words, but went wandering on, perfectly in love with existence, towards the entrance into the catacombs, near which are two rocky chambers, cut one behind another in the rocks, and known to travellers as Cleopatra's Baths.

XXXIII.

Cleopatra! Whence arises the fascination attached to this name? Other women, celebrated in history, were more beautiful, and, perhaps, also, more lavish of their beauty—Lais, Phryne, the elder and the younger Aspasia. Yet there is a strange spell about the memory of this wife of Ptolemy, which belongs to few other female names in history. It is not that Shakespeare has given her a place in one of his dramas—for the ancients regarded her as we do, and the Italians, before Shakespeare wrote, were possessed by the same sentiments. Besides, to speak the truth, Shakespeare has vulgarized her, not by exaggerating her wantonness, which might have transcended his power, but by attributing to her ideas and language incompatible with her refined Sybaritism. His Cleopatra is a fierce, coarse, wayward, unimaginative and imperious courtezan, bestowing herself where

she does not love, divided between licentiousness and ambition, and dying, when she could no longer devote herself to pleasure in her own way. In this he is not borne out by history. Pleasure in her had, no doubt, hardened the heart and corrupted the sentiments, but in the midst of her voluptuousness she retained that elegance and refinement of manners which constituted so great a part of her witchery.

The musical tones with which she spoke Greek—itself the most musical of languages—sent, we are told, a vibration to the heart, even of the most indifferent persons. According to her own theory, she was mistress of herself, that she might be the mistress of others. Shakespeare makes her brawl and rave like a northern virago. Cleopatra may have had the poison of the south under her tongue, may have had no fibre in her body which did not vibrate to the touch of vice; but while her opinions were profligate and her soul corrupt, she preserved that syren softness, without which, beauty still greater than hers would not have been able to seduce the reason of mankind, and convert history itself into panegyric of whatever is most pernicious and disastrous to the world.

Art has wearied itself in the attempt to embody the charms of Cleopatra, but hitherto without success. Guido's picture representing her with the asp at her large white breast, is a work of singular beauty. But the imagination still requires some-

thing more, and perhaps it will be only when the idea has been properly transfused into marble, that we shall be in possession of that matchless form. Baily, whose chisel has already reproduced the loveliness of Milton's Eve, has conceived the design of translating Ptolemy's wife from the ideal into the real world; and if any man possess the power to accomplish this, it is he. Out of the womb of his imagination he will bring her forth into second life, as she rose in her maiden years, from the bath, cooled, refreshed, her whole figure breathing elastic energy, while its light and graceful proportions suggested a relationship with the celestial inhabitants of the Acropolis. Aristophanes, speaking of Peace, observes, that she borrowed much of her beauty from being of the kindred of Phidias; and should Baily realize his intention of modelling the Egyptian Queen, the world will for the first time since she sank in the fatal embrace of the asp, behold her as she was in life, with her proud voluptuous countenance, her lips and smiles like Aphrodite's, her forehead like Hera's, and her bosom and general form like Hebe's.

XXXIV.

When we had reached Cleopatra's Baths, our fancy sought to represent her to itself, standing, in queenly seclusion, beneath that sombre roof of rocks. A narrow divan extends round three sides

of the chamber, the fourth lies open to the sea. The waves entering with great force, before the north wind broke against the inner wall, and falling in clouds of foam, issued forth, rattling among the large, loose pebbles below. If Cleopatra's form was ever in that wild niche, it must have been after the asp had done its work, and when she was preparing to take her place as a mummy in the sepulchral halls of the catacombs. There, in imperial darkness, she may, perhaps, still wander, brushing noiselessly against the curious traveller, who, filled from boyhood with her image, may have come thousands of miles, partly for the pleasure of treading over the soil she trod.

Having passed through the hands of the Pollinctors, the bodies were probably borne into the inner chamber, there to be spiced, swathed and bandaged preparatory to their long sleep in the precincts of Amenti. It may be questioned whether it would be agreeable or disagreeable to find Cleopatra immersed in frankincense and folds of linen, encircled by chains of golden beads, with a mask superbly painted on her face, to hide from the too curious eye the startling metamorphosis of death. For myself, I should not have shrunk from beholding her in that state, as, in spite of decay, I could—to my own satisfaction, I mean—have built her beauty up again, and made her as irresistibly resplendent as she was, before marriage with too near a relative had broken down the barriers of maiden modesty,

and let loose her thoughts in the regions of boundless desire.

XXXV.

Among my acquaintances at Alexandria, was a Syrian lady, who had herself, in her time, been handsome, and now possessed an extremely pretty daughter, married, like Juliet, at fourteen. This juvenile matron, having imitated the example of her mamma, was now in her turn a mother, and of course extremely proud of the fine boy she loved to carry about in her arms. Sometimes when I called in the morning, I found these ladies reclining luxuriously on the divan, half hidden in mountains of pink cushions. The everlasting amber mouth-piece was of course pressed to their lips, the long jasmine tube enveloped in crimson silk, descended to the floor, while clouds of fragrance from the growth of Lebanon floated lazily over their heads.

My little friend of the third generation was just old enough to distinguish persons, and, if awake when I entered, would immediately laugh and stretch forth his chubby mottled arms to come to me, right glad to escape from his indolent mammas, who could not make up their minds to romp with him as he wished. I have always been proud of the preference of children. Their love, at least, is unsophisticated; though Hobbes, perhaps, would pretend, that like that of all the rest of the world,

it is based on selfishness, for as I have just observed, the young Egyptian loved me, because I nursed him exactly as he liked. In whatever way the point may be decided, he was a right good companion, with large dark eyes, dimpled cheeks, and as sweet a physiognomy as ever belonged to infancy. Our dialogues were almost without end, carried on, at least on his part, without the use of language. But we understood each other perfectly. Whatever he desired me to do, he ordered in his way and it was done. We rolled together on the divans and on the mats; crawled under the furniture, upset work-tables, broke pipe-bowls, and did an immense amount of mischief, without troubling ourselves in the least about the consequences.

It should, however, be observed that pipe-bowls are cheap in Egypt, but had it been otherwise, my tiny Syrian matron would not have been at all angry. When the sprightly urchin fell asleep, as he often did, I took my place between the mother and daughter, on the divan, laid him on my knees, clapped my hands and ordered the black slave, who replied to the summons, to bring me a lighted chibouk, with a supply of coffee, which was set on a small table before me. I then helped myself, and smoked and chatted with the ladies about what they had seen in the harims, or about fruits and flowers, with whatever else was most interesting to them or me. Sometimes it was my turn to be a raconteur, and I related all my

travels' history, even from my boyish days to the very moment that they bade me tell it.

As the morning wore on, we were usually joined by the master of the house, a man remarkable for his liberal hospitality and extensive knowledge of Eastern politics, which he had for many years studied with much attention. With him fresh pipes were lighted, new finjans of coffee consumed. Sometimes I stayed to dinner, after which we spent the evening in smoking on a balcony overlooking the sea. I do not mention their names, but if these pages should come before them, they will perceive that I still remember with pleasure and gratitude the many happy moments for which I am indebted to them.

XXXVI.

I met occasionally at this house, a Sicilian, who was neither young nor old, nor middle-aged, but a sort of mixture of all three. He had, at times, the gravity bordering on melancholy, which belongs to the decline of life, but his feelings were fresh and ardent, and his mind, when under the effect of their inspiration, buoyant, simple, flexible and inflammable as in the most fiery period of youth. Had he been ugly, he might have been a greater favourite than he was with the ladies, who, by way I suppose of variety, would seem to have a penchant for ugly men. For myself, however, I admire handsome features, and, therefore, became much

interested with my Sicilian friend, whose countenance, when he spoke, was lighted up with enthusiasm, and, beneath an easy nonchalance of manner, concealed a depth of passionate earnestness, which, I should think, seldom failed to charm, at least, among intelligent people. He was about the middle height, well built, vigorous, active, but at that time moved slowly about as if in pain. His countenance, moreover, had a shade of paleness, scarcely natural, and he seemed to be possessed by a dread of being excited, as though there were some particular danger in it.

We did not take to each other at first, our faults being very much alike, since we both aimed at monopolizing conversation, and advocated our opinions as if no one else had a right to hold opinions at all. Still, as I have said, he soon gained upon me, and, almost without my being aware of it, I found something like a friendship for him springing up in my mind.

His hair, which had been very black, here and there showed a silver thread, running through the dusky masses, and his eyes, originally dark grey, had now lost something of their lustre, and become mild and subdued. Two peculiarities more about him I must notice; he had a voice of uncommon sweetness, and a hearty manner of shaking hands with you, which implied the infusion of a great deal of feeling into the grasp.

As was natural, he talked to me of Sicily, which

I had not then seen, except from the sea; but as I admired the sort of scenery to be found in the island, and was familiar with some of the authors who celebrate it, the topic was always agreeable. When he spoke of Palermo, a peculiar softness seemed instinctively to infuse itself into his words, while an additional shade of melancholy settled on his pale face. This excited my curiosity, and though I would not positively inquire, I so frequently directed our conversation to something connected with that city, that he one day remarked to me I seemed to take a peculiar interest in everything regarding the Sicilian capital, which was also, as it appeared, his own case: "It was not there, indeed, that I began life," said he, "but it was there that all that is valuable in it became mine, and then left me, a mere wreck of humanity, drifting not slowly towards the grave."

I did not ask him to proceed, but the request was in my countenance, and he understood it.

"If you can listen," said he, "to the story of one who is deeply unhappy, I will tell you mine, not doubting that I must sink very greatly in your estimation. Yet I am driven, by a sort of necessity, to be communicative. I have hitherto kept my secret from every person in this part of the world, except the youthful married daughter of our host, to whom I have revealed myself under a promise of the strictest secrecy; and here let me observe that no opinion is more unfounded, than

that it is not in woman's nature to keep a secret I have trusted them with a knowledge of circumstances, which, had they been divulged, would have been my ruin. But I have never been betrayed by a woman."

XXXVII.

"I was born on my father's estate, in the country near Castro Ianni, and spent the early part of my life in solitude. My education, such as it was, I owed to an old priest, who instructed me in the Latin and Greek languages, and taught me, above all things, to admire the poets of antiquity, who speak of two subjects, little understood, at least in Sicily—love and liberty.

In common, no doubt, with most other young persons, I soon began to dream of nymphs of celestial beauty, such as the Muses created in the climate of old Hellas to satisfy the yearning of its children after the ideal. On looking around me, however, and finding that nature had become more sparing of those aerial creatures in our days, the belief grew up in me, that the term beauty does not always signify a particular set of features, and a form exquisitely proportioned, but may reside in a person whose external graces, perhaps, may not be greater than her neighbour's. Still, physical beauty always produced a strong effect on me, and partly regulated

my choice of a wife, with whom, when married, I went to live at Palermo.

"And here I ought to observe, that, contrary to the custom of the country, ours was a match of love. We preferred each other before all the world, and in my inmost heart I felt persuaded that this would be the case through life, however much we might either of us be tempted. But you remember the old saying, Let no one be accounted happy till he is dead, since it is impossible to foresee what calamity may befal him. I have said that my wife was beautiful, and therefore, in the fashionable circles of Palermo, she was very greatly admired. But though her passions were powerful, her character was firm, and she passed through the ordeal of the world, not only without falling into any error, but without even giving rise to the slightest suspicion.

"Her mind, naturally inclined to piety, led her by degrees to delight in seclusion and meditation, though she never relinquished society, especially that of persons thoughtful and pious like herself. Among these was the young Countess Santa Rosalia, whose husband, though numbered among my acquaintances, was never my particular friend. He was a man of the world, delighting much in riches, fond of adding to them more and more, though as yet of an age to be rather the victim of pleasure than of avarice. I employ this term for want of a better; for he was not strictly speaking

avaricious, though intent on increasing his store, and for reasons of his own, unwilling to spend more money than he could possibly avoid. Still, in his suburban villa, where he sometimes saw his friends, he was frank and hospitable, so that very few persons left it to return to Palermo, without carrying back along with them a favourable idea of the Count. His grounds and gardens were, perhaps, the most delightful in Sicily, commanding, from numerous points, views of the finest landscapes in the world, and presenting within themselves an almost endless succession of bowers, parterres, bosquets, groves, odoriferous thickets, shady alleys, arbours and summer-houses, built in the most airy and tasteful manner.

XXXVIII.

"In the midst of this earthly paradise, the young Countess Viola almost feared to yield to the seductive influences of nature, for her peculiar theory of piety led her to connect ideas of sin with all sublunary enjoyments. My wife and I were often among the guests invited to spend some weeks during the heat of summer in that delightful retreat, while I sometimes conversed with the exalted pietist on questions of an abstruse nature, perplexing to the reason at all times, but doubly perplexing when the influence of beauty and manners, fascinating in the extreme, unites to disturb

and warp out of its proper course the current of one's ideas.

"Though myself a Catholic, not in name only, but in reality, I had still a strong objection to the Confessional, and sought often to instil into the Countess Santa Rosalia my opinions on the subject. But my arguments had little or no weight with her; apparently, at least, for perhaps, in the depths of her mind, an observant eye might have perceived the dawn of doubts, destined, at some future day, to effect her emancipation from the tyranny of the priests.

"Among the Count's friends there was a foreign diplomatist, a man of gay and reckless character, who yet knew how to conceal beneath a compound of gravity and frivolity, the gross defects of his character. Marriage was, in his eyes, a joke; so that when an opportunity offered, he preferred flirting with those who were supposed to be protected by its sanction, rather than with persons whom it would be legitimate to woo. Greatly attracted by the beauty of my wife, he first addressed his attentions to her, but finding nothing but coldness and hauteur, he relinquished the idea, and resolved on laying siege to the heart of the Countess Santa Rosalia.

"To this circumstance I may trace my ruin. I was not, unfortunately, a man much gifted with the faculty of self-examination, but yielded easily the sway to my impulses, and fancied all my

actions must be right, because systematically I meditated no wrong. It was seldom I paused to think. It had never, for example, occurred to me that I loved the Countess Santa Rosalia, attributing my preference for her society, simply to the charms of her conversation, and the singular fascination of her voice. In my eyes, moreover, she was beautiful, there being something in her smile, in her calm deep eyes, and in the general expression of her features, which I have never seen equalled."

XXXIX.

"The diplomatist commenced his operations in due form; first by those delicate, nameless flatteries, with which few women are displeased, then by those more marked tokens of regard, that open the eyes of every one, save the person most deeply concerned. When, at length, his attentions became too palpable to be overlooked, instead of complaining, as perhaps she ought, to her husband, she applied to me, saying she should feel extremely grateful if I would disabuse the mind of this foolish foreigner, by letting him know she was a woman of principle and religious feelings, who would listen to declarations of love from no man but her husband.

I undertook to execute her commission with a pleasure, the source of which I did not then

understand. The man of protocols and ultimatums, who regarded himself as the most fascinating person in the world, was considerably disconcerted when I broke the subject to him, but observing the simplicity with which I descanted upon the lady's piety and virtue, he smiled good-humouredly, and thanked me for my friendly interference.

"I have since thought he read the Countess Santa Rosalia more truly than I. That she believed herself sincere, that she considered her piety genuine, cannot be doubted; but when she betook herself to a life of devotion, she totally mistook her calling, and flew in the face of that nature which had marked her out for a different career.

"When I returned to relate the success of my mission to the Countess, I fancied I observed a change in her manner towards me, as no doubt there was in mine towards her. Our mutual confidence was strengthened, and we instinctively found ourselves in each other's society, often without knowing how our meeting had been brought to pass. By degrees I learned to confide to her all my feelings, failings, transgressions, and submitted to be chidden, sometimes very angrily, for what I had confessed. Then followed the penitence and the reconciliation; and it always happened that after these quarrels we were more friends than ever.

"Meanwhile, all the world but ourselves saw distinctly what was going on in our minds. I

never voluntarily quitted her side, was never content but when conversing with her. Had some sincere friend candidly and earnestly pointed out to me the gulph of shame and misery towards which I was hastening, we might, even then, have escaped. An honest word might have done it. Neither I nor the Countess possessed the least power of reflection, but, immersed in a torrent of passion which acted the part of destiny, we were borne along irresistibly towards our ruin."

XL.

"About this time it happened, most fatally for my peace, that the Count undertook a journey to Naples, leaving his wife alone and unprotected behind him. Her heart had now begun to understand itself, and she took refuge from the idea of me in increased frequency of attendance at mass, in prayers, fastings, confessions, and various kinds of penances. Nor did I myself yield up the rein to my impulses without many struggles. I fell back upon the love of my wife, whom, to my sorrow, I found plunged in ascetic devotions, unmindful of the things of this world, though in the depths of her heart fonder of me than ever. My best course would have been to leave Palermo, and betake myself to travelling, or to some absorbing pursuit, far away from the source of temptation. Instead of this, I trusted boldly to my philosophy,

and so far from avoiding the society of the Countess, placed myself as frequently as possible within the sphere of its attraction.

"To an attentive observer, who should have been able to read our hearts, it would now have been evident that we secretly feared each other, though mutually attracted by an instinct no longer to be mistaken. Once and again in the mechanical performance of a duty, rather hated than loved, she consulted her confessor, a pious and exemplary, but weak old man, who enjoined her certain penances, which he vainly supposed would suffice to quell the turbulence of the passions, and keep her in the paths of virtue. . . . . .

"Viola, also accustomed to reckon on the force and purity of her own motives, and on the exalted nature of her devotion, fell systematically into the snare of self-delusion. At length, however, she found herself driven from every place of refuge, save the position she occupied in the eyes of the world. Could she, without dispute the holiest woman in Palermo, the gentlest, the most charitable, almost worthy for her many virtues to be canonized as a saint,—could she forget her connubial vows, and cherish a terrestrial passion for a man not her husband? The bare idea became a torture to her, and she fled from it for relief, not to the solitude of a penitential cell, but to me.

"Everything now seemed to conspire our mutual destruction. My wife accepted an invitation to

spend some few weeks at the house of a female friend in the country, and thus deprived me of my only remaining safeguard.

"You will despise me, and, no doubt, with justice, for the weakness of my character; but I am not setting myself up as a pattern; I am not pronouncing my own eulogium; I am not challenging comparison with the great and good; I am simply confessing my transgressions, and reflecting with the deepest anguish on the circumstances that might have preserved me. My wife's influence ought, no doubt, to have been the same whether present or absent; the love of her ought to have filled my whole being; and, however inexplicable it may seem, it did so in a certain sense, though I drew a subtle distinction between it and my feeling for the Countess. The heart is full of sophistry, which often, in the tempests of passion, completely darkens the understanding; and, strange inconsistency, even now, while severely condemning myself, I frankly own I cannot altogether regret the disturbed but brilliant dream, which threw its spell over me at that period.

"You will, however, do me the credit to believe that my conduct was not the result of any plan, but simply the consequence of ideas and sentiments, regulated by no received theory. A thick cloud had descended on my mind, and I seemed to walk perpetually in darkness, save when the

Countess Santa Rosalia was by my side. Then the earth appeared luminous, then it was indifferent to me whether it was summer or winter, cold or hot, night or day. I had become mentally to all intents and purposes a slave, the chains of passion, not of sense, were around me, encircling my thoughts, binding them down to one idea, warping them in a particular direction, and depriving them of the power of all spontaneous motion in any other."

XLI.

"As you have not been in Sicily, I may observe to you, that though we have, properly speaking, little winter, yet the inclement season is occasionally attended by rough and gloomy weather. At the point of my story on which I am now about to touch, my sensations almost overpower me. As I then trembled to look forward, I now tremble to revert my gaze. The star of my life was about to set; evil influences enveloped me. For all the common affairs of life I felt the most inexpressible distaste; my friends became so many annoyances to me, my duties became burdens, my accustomed occupations were shunned as so many plagues; even my studies, once the source of so much sunshine to my soul, were transformed into loathsome drudgery, totally beneath the regard of an intellectual creature. In the infinite universe there

was but one spot in which I could taste of happiness, and that was by the Countess's side.

"I ceased, therefore, to consult the dictates of prudence, which had no longer any weight with me, and the course she followed was, as I afterwards learned, precisely the same. Almost every day on arising from her bed, she sank upon her knees, clasped the crucifix to her breast, and in an agony of tears and sorrow, besought the protection of heaven against the man she loved. When this was over, her thoughts rushed tumultuously to the accustomed object, and she became impatient of existence till I appeared. Then everything was quite forgotten: heaven, earth, good resolutions, consideration for the world, all that constitutes a restraint on human conduct.

"It was a gloomy day in winter—the wind blowing from the north, had heaped upon the city masses of thick clouds, which breaking against the Monte Pellegrino and the adjacent heights, fell in torrents of rain, that swept the streets, and caused them to be almost deserted. But however violent might be the tempest without, the tempest *within* raged still more fiercely. I wandered, therefore, into the streets, heedless in what direction I moved, but it being as yet too early to think of visiting Viola, on my way I was led, not, I confess, by any feeling of devotion, though I know not by what other impulse, to enter the ancient Cathedral, where, as I walked about, a certain

amount of calm and serenity returned to my mind. A darkness, almost resembling that of night, prevailed without, the rain beat against the casements, which at the same time rattled in the wind; the vaulted ceiling rose and rose till it was lost in gloom, while here and there, in the front of distant altars, numerous tapers twinkled and flickered like dim stars in the currents of passing air. A burst of penitence came over me. I dropped upon my knees near a clustered column, and lifting up my eyes to heaven, prayed earnestly to be preserved from temptation. The melting power of devotion descended into my soul, and as my thoughts winged their way upwards, my heart seemed to expand in my bosom, and appeared so capacious that its charity could have embraced the whole world.

"At this moment, as my eyes shot along the aisles, I perceived the light graceful figure of the Countess Santa Rosalia moving noiselessly towards me. I arose to meet her. Instead of being distanced and cooled by the character of the place in which we met, our feelings only seemed by that circumstance to be more completely inflamed. We walked up and down, speaking little, but listening to the rain and the wind, and observing the strange gloom that reigned around. What was the case with her I cannot say, but my own thoughts were by no means in harmony with external nature. My whole being was filled with light and joy, and

as I moved to and fro, pressing her arm to my side, the wish sprang up in my heart, that we might ever be thus moving side by side through the immeasurable spaces of eternity.

"When at length we quitted the church to return home, the storm seemed to have augmented, the rain-gusts swept along the pavement, drenching my gentle friend to the skin, and doubtless wetting me also, though of this I was not conscious. Our walk was long, and yet we purposely protracted it. There was to be a ball given by a friend in the evening, and it was agreed I should accompany her thither,—not that we either of us desired the world's society, but that we might have a pretext for enjoying our own.

"We dressed, we repaired to the place. We danced once or twice together, but swayed by indescribable impulses, and impatient of the presence of crowds, we left at an early hour, hurried away by our evil genius. Her carriage was at the door, but we passed it, and though the rain still fell in torrents, resolved perversely to return on foot. Neither of us could of course be ignorant, that this was contrary to all rule, nay, to the most ordinary theory of propriety; but pride and the sense of decorum had forsaken us, and we consulted our own fantasies, without at all thinking of the world. Nothing could be more unsuited to walking, even in fine weather, than our dress, but we wrapped ourselves in cloaks, and fancied

there was some merit in breasting together that storm, which may be said to have been typical of that other tempest that was soon to break upon us, and probably sweep us, with all our passions and our hopes, from the frail platform of existence.

"On returning to her palace we passed in by a private entrance, and in a few minutes I found myself, for the first time, in her boudoir, sitting in an arm chair before a blazing fire, while she stood drying herself beside me. Never did one form of clay exercise so powerful an influence over another. An atmosphere of all that is attracting, bewitching, intoxicating in nature surrounded her. She spoke little, her bosom rose and fell convulsively, her eyes, though open, saw nothing, while mine saw only her. There was thunder, there was lightning; the palace rocked, the earth seemed ready to open and swallow us. But we heeded it not. One strong, concentrated feeling over-mastered all others."

XLII.

"When I left several hours later, Viola took a ring from her finger, and put it on one of mine, saying, 'Wear that while you love me, and when you cease to do so, return it without explanation or comment. I shall know my fate, and will prepare to endure it as I best may.'"

As he repeated these words, the Sicilian held up

his hand and showed me the jewelled ring still glittering on his finger.

"I have suffered much since then," said he, "but this little hoop of gold will descend with my ashes into the tomb, and when all that is mortal of me shall have mouldered to dust, will continue there a lasting token beneath the earth, that neither time nor death could obliterate the feelings with which I regarded that woman.

"But I diverge from my narrative. My faith had now been pledged to another than my wife, and I was yet unconscious I had transgressed. Viola had a more tender conscience, and grieved and tortured herself almost without intermission, relinquishing her religious exercises, absenting herself from the confessional, and plunging into a torrent of secular thoughts, in order that, if possible, she might lose in it the remembrance of our mutual sin. But even now we did not, as prudence would have dictated, remain long apart. With the censorious eye of the world upon us, we were still constantly together, and at length some considerate friend, anxious for my reformation, revealed the secret of my delinquency to my wife. At first incredulity stood her friend; she would not believe she had been injured. Her magnanimous heart, her unbounded charity, her stores of unrevealed love, her pride, her too exalted conception of my character, stood in the way, and she would not credit what she heard.

"But the best and kindest natures may be stung to madness by injuries. Had she possessed children, on whom she could have concentrated her affections, my guilt might have been forgiven. But I had hitherto been all in all to her; never had she, waking or sleeping, indulged a single preference for another. With me her love began, with me it terminated, and once convinced I had wronged her, she instantly determined on the course to be pursued."

XLIII.

"Summer had come round, and in the very boudoir to which I have alluded, I was one evening sitting on an embroidered stool at the feet of Viola, when suddenly my wife entered, and casting a look of deep reproach on her friend, plunged a poignard into my breast. The last thing I remember was seeing my own blood on her white hand, as she withdrew the steel with the intention of burying it in her own heart, thus quenching the sense of wrong with that which felt the wrong.

"Though little time was left me for thought, I understood her sentiments completely. The dagger in her eyes was sacred to us both, and she would have thought it contaminated had it touched the countess. Between our hearts lay the struggle. It was, so to speak, a domestic tragedy, in which no third person could be an actor. Love in its

infinite refinement, taught her to look on everything external to us as profane,—and now that her system of ideas had been disturbed, it was not in the power of anything short of Omnipotence to restore it again to its former state. It was purely through this glorious feeling that she plunged the poignard into my breast. She would not have me live to be unworthy, and would not herself live to think me so. Death in her eyes, therefore,—death for us both,—was better than life. With regard to Viola, it seemed to her indifferent whether she lived or died. All she knew was, that her hand should not deal the blow. She stabbed me because she loved me, and would have stabbed herself, because she thought it impossible, after being convinced of my faithlessness, to face the dreariness and bitterness of life. Beyond the grave, she hoped our souls might regain their purity, be absorbed consciously once more in each other, or melt away together into the great ocean of forgetfulness.

"But her strength failed her, and Viola, gathering courage from despair, wrested the dagger from her hand. I was conveyed to a neighbouring monastery, where I might receive the consolations of religion before my death. My wife attempting to follow me, was repulsed by the monks, who, however, found all the authority of the Church scarcely sufficient to overawe her impetuous affection. The scene between her and Viola I can only

describe from report. When I was supposed to be dead, and my wife, overwhelmed by the violence of her feelings, stood in agonizing uncertainty respecting her next step, the fear of God having again arisen to combat the suggestions of mere human love, Viola, falling on her knees, restored the poignard, and besought her to plunge it into her breast. Then followed confession, and self-reproach, contrition, forgiveness, and reconciliation. I know not the details, neither could I relate them if I did, but, after a variety of struggles, instead of parting, as might have been expected, for ever, they clung to each other and became inseparable, devoting their days and nights, their thoughts and actions, to the relieving of distress and sorrow.

"The Church had taken me under its protection, —I was supposed to die—my property passed into the hands of my wife, save a pittance which I reserved to support existence, till I should breathe my last, far from those whose peace and happiness I had destroyed. News reaches me from time to time, through a friendly monk at Palermo, and I learn that the two victims of my crime still persist in their devotion and their charity, while alone in this distant land I cherish the deepest feelings of repentance, which, I trust, may smooth for me the way to death.

Poor man! he was nearer his end, than, perhaps, he thought. Not many weeks after I quitted Alexandria, death came to his deliverance, and he

now lies in the garden of the Franciscan convent, beneath a plain, stone slab, inscribed with his christian name and the date of his decease. The monk, who attended him in his dying moments, told me that the last word he uttered was his wife's name, and that after the power of speech had left him, he seemed to be pleading alternately with her and with God for forgiveness. A chain plaited from her hair, passed round his breast, and was buried with him. Such are the strange inconsistencies of human nature!

XLIV.

Few things are more interesting than those narratives in which the writers give a history of their own minds. But they are rare, because it is seldom that a man really studies himself and observes the genesis of his own thoughts, or when he does, can muster the courage necessary to reveal them. When recalling the adventures of former years, one should, if possible, revive the frame of mind in which they were gone through, and not suffer the clouds of after reflection or melancholy to dim the lustre of those sunny days.

But this is impossible. Past events are necessarily contemplated from the point of view at which we stand when taking our retrospect, and acquire half their significance from circumstances no way connected with them. For example, when I consider

the way in which I passed my time at Alexandria, I am very far from being sure that I now take the same view I took then. It seemed to be my duty to see all there was to be seen, and I can scarcely reproach my other self of those days with having been wanting in curiosity. Among the amusements of the place, I must not omit to notice the performance of plays, by amateurs, who strutted and fretted their little hour upon the stage with as much gaiety and enthusiasm, as if they had anticipated immortality from their histrionic achievements.

XLV.

Should our views differ on the subject of private theatricals, you will at least, I trust, be philosophical and tolerant. I think them often more comic and amusing than the real theatricals of the stage; there is so much fuss, so much importance, so much strutting, mouthing and grimace-making among the unfledged actors and actresses.

I went to witness a display of this sort at Alexandria. The performers were all foreigners, French, chiefly, and Italians, who are not at all in an unnatural position on the boards of a theatre. Here, with us, when a play is to be acted in private, or rather by amateurs for a sort of public, the female characters are generally personated by professional actresses, ladies not considering it decorous to bounce and flutter before an assemblage of strangers.

They managed this matter differently at Alexandria. I forget what the play was, but there were four women in it, two who had a great deal to say, and other two almost condemned to be mutes.

But if they were silent on the stage, they were certainly very much the reverse while preparing to figure there. By special favour I was present at some few rehearsals, at which all the personages of the drama were dressed with the minutest attention to costume. No regard, however, was paid to the costume of the tongue, for the semi-mutes, instead of imitating the philosophical silence of fishes, chattered incessantly, disputing with their friends, male and female, on ten thousand topics, no way connected with the affair in hand. To make amends, they were extremely pretty, which, indeed, was their chief recommendation, and their mammas, being aware of the fact, diligently accompanied them to the Thespian Hall.

I, one day, witnessed a very characteristic incident. Two of the youngest of these damsels, while engaged in some deep and impassioned scene of love, heard, suddenly, in the next room, the sharp cry of an infant, which, it was evident, would not be pacified. Leaving their enamoured swains on their knees, the young ladies, whom I then discovered to be themselves mammas, rushed off to suckle their babies, and after having performed this matronly office, returned amidst smiles of

welcome to resume their parts in the love scene, and listen to the sighs of two married merchants, who rivalled Pyramus himself in the exhibition of soft sentiment.

There was one huge rumbustuous fellow among them, who seemed to contain all the properties of a farce within himself. In stature quite a giant, with ruby face, double chin, and nose like the Tower of Babel, rising in seven stories, one above another, he imagined himself the most fascinating and seductive of all the descendants of Adam, and when a handsome woman came near him, whether on the stage or not, his little eyes twinkled like those of a rhinoceros, when just about to stick his horn into an elephant. As a merchant, he was a splendid fellow, greatly addicted to claret and brandy and water. But he had somehow taken it into his head to be literary, and it was pretty confidently whispered about that he was the author of the play, to witness the performance of which all the élite of Alexandrian society were invited. For himself, poor man, he had a small share of his own iambics allotted to him, the only speech he had to pronounce, consisting of three lines and a half.

The lover was a coxcomb of the first water. Born somewhere near the foot of the Alps, he pronounced Italian abominably, but yet in general society would vaunt the correctness of his ear, and maintain that his accent and intonation were the

finest in the world. He would, likewise, discourse fluently of antiquity and the learned languages, of which he understood not a syllable, and correct the Romans in the pronunciation of Italian.

The play was acted in the house of a pasha, bitten with European ideas, who sat among the audience and made himself popular by shaking hands with the gentlemen, and chucking the young ladies under the chin, which he thought a mark of polite refinement, and, therefore, never omitted it on any occasion. The women thus distinguished, considered themselves highly honoured, and went about the city for weeks afterwards, descanting to all their friends and acquaintances on the gracious condescension of his highness.

Owing to a perverse trick of memory, I entirely forget the general subject of the piece, though I know there was an outrageous amount of satire in it, the writer having thought it philosophical to believe and speak as ill of mankind as possible. It is, in fact, one of the chief distinctions of the modern Macedonians to excel all the rest of the world in misanthropy.

XLVI.

Connected with Easter in Alexandria, I have very pleasant recollections, for it was during that season I beheld, for the second time in my life, the perfection of human beauty. The Greeks are as

noisy in their devotion as the Germans in their philosophy, and always appear to be inviting the whole world to witness their pious achievements. I went early on Sunday morning, accompanied by the consul-general, to their church, where we were amused by the firing of pistols, often loaded with ball, by shouting, by laughter, by a Babel of talk, by chanting of services, and preaching in a little room in a corner of a court, to which everybody was too much excited to listen.

Upon the whole, as the reader will have discovered, I am partial to the Greeks, and it is consequently out of no prejudice, I declare, that I thought them on that morning, when closely packed, rushing about and perspiring, anything but odoriferous or pleasant. I, therefore, ascended with the consul to the terraced roof of the convent, where we could enjoy the fresh breeze, blowing from Lake Mareotis. It was about six o'clock in the morning, the air was bracing and buoyant, and the sounds of the Greek language buzzing and murmuring around, irresistibly carried back my fancy to Pagan Hellas.

While I was in this mood, the consul noticed a door opening into an apartment on the summit of the roof, and into this our curiosity impelled us to enter. We there beheld a picture, which Raffaelle would have despaired to paint. A young Greek mother was sitting on a low chair with her right foot resting on a stool, and her knee supporting the head of a baby which lay asleep on her lap.

Her right breast was uncovered, and from the milk which was still on the infant's lips, it was clear it had only just relinquished the nipple to fall off into that divine slumber, which, of all created things, infancy, perhaps, only knows.

To decide between the beauty of the mother and child would be difficult. For her, she seemed to me a thing of celestial mould; her face formed like that of Niobe in the first dawn of youth, her large dark eyes, her expansive forehead, her exquisitely proportioned nose, her mouth, like the bow of Eros, her chin, round and rich, such as is found in the masterpieces of Grecian sculpture. She wore on her head a sort of turban, and from beneath this the black hair escaping in confusion, hung over her neck, and two or three loose tresses fell upon her white breast. A slave stood beside her, with arms crossed. She was evidently rapt by the contemplation of her mistress, as the mistress by the contemplation of her baby, so that for some time neither of them noticed us. The mother, not much removed beyond the precincts of girlhood, gazed with an ineffable smile on her boy, remembering or prophesying, God knows what, but her look of happiness I have never seen surpassed. Her bright red lips were slightly parted, as if to inhale the beatitude that floated round her like an atmosphere. Presently she raised her large, dark eyes, and seeing us, hastily covered her breast, which was beautifully formed, and then giving the

child to the nurse, glided out of the apartment, leaving us endeavouring to shape the air into some faint representation of her loveliness. The slave kissed the child's forehead, and then throwing a shawl over it, to protect it from the evil eye, disappeared after her mistress.

XLVII.

The time for leaving Alexandria came at length, and I set out in company with a number of persons, not one of whom should ever have set his foot on the sands of Egypt as a traveller; for Vere remained behind to overtake me at Rosetta. Had I been entirely alone, I should have felt less lonely. It is sympathy that makes society, not the mere presence of individuals. Those with whom I now journeyed, stood half between me and the poetry of the scene, since they shed the common-place of their characters over everything around.

For myself, as I was now, properly speaking, entering for the first time on the Desert, my sensations were as extraordinary as they were new. A strange conceit flashed across my fancy. I thought that all the tears shed by humanity on that wild spot, might have sufficed to fertilize it—to bind together its wandering particles, and clothe its hollows and eminences with verdure.

Looking around, far and near, nothing presented itself but beauty—the rolling, flashing, glittering

sea—the sky, hazy with its own splendour,—interminable expanses of sand,—hillocks, warm and genial, and fringed in the distance with palm groves. Presently the mirage came, with its fantastic phenomena, to vary and beautify the landscape. Here and there, in capacious basons, appeared a succession of silvery lakes, reflecting the sky and the clouds, and the stately march of the camels, as, with Bedouins on their backs, they paced slowly past, to disappear in the wilderness.

Yet, if the reader will forgive a paradox, by far the most beautiful portion of the landscape was that which was invisible—that which came thither with me from the north, a chain of associations many thousand years old, events not to be forgotten while man continues to inhabit this planet—the ancient empires, ancient creeds, which had passed like pageants over those sands, and left behind them a glory almost as unfading as the stars. This it was that filled my soul as I moved towards Canopus.

There is, as every one knows, a mystery in light, which material itself seems to penetrate our own material natures, to be reflected, as it were, upon our spirit, till the sunshine without is responded to and overpowered by the sunshine within. This I felt, when, having separated myself from my noisy companions, I rode, with a solitary Arab beside me, towards Aboukir Bay. On our left lay a diminutive village of the children of Ishmael,

encompassed by date-palms, and looking, in the calm splendour of evening, like the very abode of peace. I pictured to myself every little hearth surrounded by a Muslim family, who, if too poor to own a prayer-carpet, could kneel down, side by side, and perform their devotions on the sand. God only knows, however, whether they were devout or not, but as the rays of the setting sun glowed upon the palm-trees, on the minaret of the village mosque, and on the tombs of holy men, who lived and died in the faith of El-Islam, it seemed to me that a peculiar blessing of heaven rested on the spot, and that the inhabitants were as happy as the ambition and avarice of the Pasha would allow them to be.

But do their worst, even the cruellest tyrants cannot extirpate all solace from the human breast, where there is ever much that is independent of their power. I mean that bright web of the domestic affections of husband and wife, parent and child, which grows and spreads like a creeping plant over the earth's surface, to be blighted by no winds—checked by no oppression, but ever fresh and verdant, rendering the world beautiful as Paradise.

XLVIII.

As evening was thickening into night, we passed over a narrow neck of land, or rather an artificial embankment, dividing the sea from the lake. On

one side, the salt spray, thrown up by the north wind, sprinkled our faces; on the other, the waters lay hushed, as if in sleep, and stretched away dimly into the distance, where villages and palm-groves marked the skirts of the Desert.

It was already dark when we reached the edge of the broad channel, representing the Canopic branch of the Nile, by which the waters of the Lake Maadia pour into the sea. It was one of those nights, rare in Egypt, in which the north seems to extend its empire into Africa. A dismal, grey cloud covered the whole face of heaven, and a fine, drizzling rain, accompanied by piercing cold, descended on the thankless sands.

I should have observed, that for several days before quitting Alexandria, I had been suffering from Malaria-fever, which now appeared to increase with the chill of the night. The haunt of the ferrymen was somewhere on the other side of the passage, and as they paid no attention to our shouts, we began to apprehend they had retired early to bed, at too great a distance to be roused by us. There was no shelter anywhere. The bleak north wind came blowing in from the Mediterranean over the wet, sandy flat, where we stood shivering and dejected, fearing lest we should have to pass the night there, or to make our way back some miles to the village of Aboukir.

At length we took it into our heads to fire off several pistols in succession, soon after which we

heard the splash of oars, and the low, guttural voices of several Arabs from a boat approaching over the dark waters. How we huddled into the bark, asses and all; how we were rowed across, and landed near a solitary stone building, which already stood there, apparently in much the same condition as far back as the times of Thevenot and Pietro della Valle, I need not here pause to relate.

The Arabs, who accompanied us, attended to our beasts, and we found our way as fast as we could into the little caravanserai, where we were too happy to pass the night under shelter. Everybody has experienced the transition from depression and melancholy to joy; and such is our nature that we feel this exalted emotion on very trifling occasions: for example, when we escape the necessity of remaining exposed to the nocturnal blasts on the sands of Egypt.

The East, I trust, will never lose its characteristics, otherwise the pleasure of travelling there will be at an end. On the present occasion we derived extreme satisfaction from the hospitality, certainly not altogether disinterested, of a wandering Muslim, who had stationed himself in the caravanserai for the purpose of welcoming and accommodating strangers, by kindling a fire, boiling coffee, cooking supper, and lighting their pipes; expecting, no doubt, some small gratuity by way of acknowledgment. He struck me as an exceedingly curious looking man: his face was much to

dark to have derived its colour from the atmosphere he then lived in. He must have penetrated, heaven knows how far, into the south, faced the suns of the tropics, perhaps of the equator, and heard the voice of old Nile, as he whispers to himself in those mighty solitudes he traverses before he enters the green and smiling Valley, which he has created on the northern skirts of Africa for his repose.

XLIX.

Our new friend was an Osmanli, proud of his race, but humble through devout poverty. We had brought charcoal with us from Iskenderea, and with this a blazing fire was soon kindled, between large square stones on a capacious hearth. To warm and dry us a quantity of brushwood, collected I know not where, was heaped upon the charcoal, and as we stood before the cheerful blaze, laughing and chatting, I forgot my fever and began to long for the coffee, which the worthy Turk was actively preparing. As soon as it was ready, we unrolled our beds on the floor instead of carpets, and squatted upon them to sip the Mokha and devour the delicacies we had brought along with us.

It is fortunate for me that neither fever nor catarrh, nor scarcely any other disease that flesh is heir to, deprives me of appetite. I enjoyed, therefore, almost as if in health, the supper set before us and the pipes which followed it. But then came my punishment; for, excited by the coffee, and the

fumes of the Latakia, I could not get a wink of sleep, while my companions had no sooner lain down, than they were in the land of forgetfulness. One dim lamp, suspended from a niche in the wall, threw a gloomy light over our dormitory, into which the wind entered through a thousand apertures, now and then making me shiver beneath the mountain of clothes I had piled upon myself.

Few men, I suspect, are heroes when suffering from malaria, one of the most depressing of all the diseases that afflict humanity. At any rate, my temper of mind was just then anything but heroic. I regretted the Alps; I regretted the picturesque, delightful banks of Lake Leman; above all, I regretted that little knot of human beings domesticated high up on their slopes, within sight of Mont Blanc, and of which I had once formed the centre. I could not bring myself to understand why I had left them—what right had I to travel, or what could there be in Egypt to compensate me for leaving home?

> "The thing we have, we prize not,
> But being lost, why, then we reck' the value,
> And see the good, possession would not show us,
> Whilst it was ours."

Not knowing how else to dissipate the ennui of that lonely night, I got up stealthily, begged a little charcoal of the Turk, who still sat musing by the fire, and placing it on the bowl of a well-filled pipe, solaced myself as well as I could by

smoking, while I listened to the wind and the driving rain without. Addison quotes somewhere and translates two lines from a Roman poet, which I remembered not pleasantly, as I looked around me and contrasted the condition of my companions with my own :—

"How sweet, in sleep, to pass the fleeting hours,
Lull'd by the whistling winds and dashing showers!"

Some time after midnight I heard a loud knocking at the outer door of the caravanserai, where a party of Bedouins, who had been overtaken in the Desert by the rain, vociferously demanded admittance. They were soon comfortably crowding round the fire, laughing loudly, talking all at once, and stunning the sedate Turk with their clamorous merriment.

It is sometimes amusing to observe the combinations produced by what we call accident. Here were the descendants of a race who came from near the Chinese wall, with the offspring of Abraham by Hagar, and Celts from North Britain, and Normans, and Anglo-Saxons, huddled together in one ruinous building, to take shelter from a storm on the coast of Africa.

As soon as the rain ceased, the Bedouins took their departure, and presently after I observed streaks of moonlight making their way through crevices in the shutters. I therefore got up, wrapped my burnouse closely about me, and stepped out to get a glimpse of the sea and the Desert at that still hour. The Turk, who seemed

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to stand in no need of sleep, came forth to keep me company, but as neither of us knew any language which the other understood, we were worse than solitude to each other. At least his presence was irksome to me, because he appeared a living enigma which I could not interpret. He uttered unintelligible sounds, meant, I am sure, to be words of kindness and courtesy. But beyond this general signification which I attributed to them, they did not assist our communion; and finding this to be the case, the kind-hearted Osmanli retreated, leaving me to pursue my meditations alone.

What muse or goddess is it that presides over the picturesque? Let her, if there be a spark of generosity in her nature, now descend to my aid, for I desire to paint one of the most poetical landscapes in the world. Imagine the Mediterranean stretching away interminably towards the north, rippling, heaving, quivering, with a broad wake of moonlight traversing its surface, till lost in the distance like a path paved with pearls and silver for the white feet of the Nereids. Close at hand, a succession of diminutive waves broke with soft whispers at my feet, just kissing the glittering sands, as if by stealth, and then retreating to conceal themselves in the deep bosom of Father Ocean. It always seems rational to my fancy to endow the sea with life, and to persuade ourselves that it sympathises with us and smiles upon us, and becomes a sort of companion when we have no other. It suggests, also, an idea of the infinite,

touching, at the same moment, upon the shores of all lands—stormy and big with icebergs towards the poles, while on the margin of tropic climes its voice at dawn or midnight is as soft as the murmurs of love. My eyes, literally fascinated, could with difficulty withdraw their gaze to fix it for a moment on Lake Maadia, which *in* miniature imitated the Mediterranean, as the night breeze ruffled its surface. Here and there on the edge of the horizon I fancied I could detect the existence of palm forests, while the rest of the landscape was one boundless expanse of sand, slightly uneven and chequered at intervals with streaks of light.

All travellers must have heard, though few have noticed, that low, rustling sound made by the particles of sand, as they are drifted by the breeze over the face of the desert, like a gentle whisper, arising articulately from the earth, now here, now there, now higher, then fainter, or more loud, according to the motion of the wind, and the swells and depressions of the waste. I listened to it in conjunction with the sea's murmur, which in obedience to the temper of our minds seems to be the language of joy, or the cry of a mighty creature in anguish.

L.

Our whole company was in motion before the sun. Dawn is beautiful in all countries, and nothing is more delightful than to witness it, or even at the distance of years to recal its sublimity. I have

always, when observing the opening eyelids of the morning, fancied the earth was undergoing a new creation, and issuing forth, radiant in loveliness, from the hands of God. To others, perhaps, this also appears to be the case, in rich and luxuriant regions, where woods, groves, meadows, valleys, mountains and streams suggest ideas of abundance and happiness. But I have seldom met any who have experienced the same sensation in the desert. Admiration, here, seems confined to few.

As I looked, however, towards the east, over the undulating, sandy plain, and saw the faint, pearly light begin to flush the sky on the edge of the horizon, I thought I had never beheld anything more glorious. Every instant the arch of splendour expanded, and embraced a larger section of the heavens, while streaks of saffron and crimson, shot up rapidly from some fiery centre, seemed to pierce the firmament, like arrows blotting out the stars with their quivering pulsations, and imparting to the whole face of nature a profusion of gorgeous features inexpressibly magnificent. The figures of poetry could never keep pace with the chariot of Eos. Before language could supply epithets to paint one phenomenon, a series of new appearances would have succeeded and vanished. The change from saffron to crimson, from crimson to rose-colour, from rose-colour to purple, from purple to amethyst, and from this again to cærulean blue, chased and veined, and quivering tremulously with light, was swift as thought. At length the sun itself arose,

and the desert lay blushing before it like an eastern bride.

All the morning we journeyed on, earnestly longing to behold the minarets and palm-groves of Er-Rashid present themselves in the distance. At last they appeared, and in a short time we were among them, admiring the vast clusters of golden dates suspended over our heads, and amused by the Arab boys, who, with sticks and brick-bats, were bringing them to the ground in showers.

LI.

One of the pleasures of travelling, is to be accompanied by persons who experience sensations analogous to your own. Otherwise you and they will never be pleased at the same time; one will desire to push on, while the other is anxious to be stationary; one will despise what the other admires, and the feelings of both will, in the end, be neutralized by incessant contradiction. All countries contain the germs of all sorts of reflections, and have sights for the vulgar as well as for the most intellectual and refined. It happens generally, however, that the man of vulgarity amuses himself with ridiculing everything beyond the reach of his understanding. What he does not comprehend, he considers not worth comprehending; what he does not admire, not worth admiration.

There is an Arab apologue, originally invented,

I presume, to illustrate the different classes of travellers. Once upon a time, they say, three men, mounted on camels, set out to traverse the Desert, in search of fresh pasturage for the flocks of their tribe. At starting, they had many skins full of water, many bags full of dates. But as they proceeded, their water became scanty, and they were compelled to eat sparingly of their simple provisions. One of them had been brought up among the children of the Jinn, who had purged his eyes of the films of sense, and rendered them piercing in things moral, to discern the right from the wrong, and in things material, to discover what was hidden from others. But he was under a vow and a curse that he should never disclose to any what he saw, but apply his knowledge and his discernment exclusively for his own benefit. One favour was granted him, namely, that he might make a simple statement of the truth, and if upon that he was believed, well—if not, the consequences were to fall on those who were wanting in faith.

When the travellers had drank the last drop of water out of their skins, and eaten the last date, they sat down upon the sand and lamented, and beat their breasts, and called upon God, believing their last hour was come: but the favoured of the Jinn soon recollected himself, and said, "Friends, be of good cheer, there is water in yonder hollow: I can distinctly discern the mists arising from it, and a little further towards the right, there is a

grove of palm-trees, as I perceive by the smell." Weak and emaciated as they were, his two companions laughed at him and replied, "God is merciful! Have we not eyes like thee, O brother, and yet, looking around us, we discover neither water nor date-trees?" They then relapsed into the mood of sorrow, and exclaimed: "Our last hour is come. There is no strength or power but in God."

The third traveller then arose and journeyed forward and came to the well, where he quenched his thirst, and was refreshed and comforted. He went also to the date-trees, and shaking down some fruit, satisfied his appetite. After which, ascending a lofty sand-hill, where he could be seen by his friends, he shouted and made signs, by which one of them was encouraged to mount his camel and join him—the other remaining where he was, perished of hunger. The two Bedouins having first filled their skins and date-bags, now pursued their journey, and rode night and day till they were once more without food or water. Then the friend of the Jinn said: "I see a cloud in the sky, and I know there will be rain, and yonder on the verge of the horizon there is a thicket, in which we shall find berries." But his companion answered, "Verily there is no truth in thy statement; I will return by the way I came, and trust no further to thy prognostications." So he went back, and next day the vultures were feeding upon him and his beast. He whom the Jinn had instructed, experienced no discouragement, but went on his way,

finding everywhere fresh springs and date-groves and nourishing fruits till he came to a land of fertility and plenty, to which he afterwards guided his tribe; and there, in a large and beautiful oasis, they are settled at the present day.

LII.

The gentlemen who accompanied me to Er-Rashid had never been meant by nature to travel in any part of the world, least of all in Egypt. What was good in the wine, in the fruits and the dinners, they thoroughly relished, but with regard to the associations which impart a strange pleasure to him whose mind happens to be possessed of them, those honest individuals were completely at sea.

We halted at a small caravanserai, kept by natives of Egypt, who understanding something of the manners of the Franks, immediately set about providing us with such food as they thought would be most agreeable to us. In the interval everybody betook himself to the amusement best suited to his taste. For myself, I went and leaned out of a little latticed window opening into a court-yard, where there was a fountain and a palm-tree with large masses of shadow. Nearly opposite, at another window with the blinds drawn up, sat a lady in a thoughtful attitude, looking down upon the splashing waters. The distance would not permit me to distinguish whether she was young or old. I could only observe she was richly dressed,

and held something like a musical instrument in her hand. Presently she touched the strings and sang, to my extreme surprise, a portion of the "Sonnambula." This was like hearing the songs of Zion in a strange land. It transported me at once, *malgré moi*, to the bottom of the Haymarket, where I had often, in years gone by, listened to the same strains from the first singers in Europe.

Assuredly the greater part of our lives is scarcely distinguishable from a dream, and the things we delight in are empty beyond description. We ourselves are little better than instruments played upon by a thousand influences, which draw forth music from us, good or bad—as it may happen—leaving behind, in some cases, barely a reminiscence of what has taken place. None of us preserves a true record of his sensations. A few particles of air modulated and passing through a woman's throat, throw us into ecstasies, fill us with flattering hopes, or disturb the well-spring of memory, and bring back all the past gushing over our souls. Everything around us is in its essence a mystery, but music appears to be the most mysterious of all things. It is a sort of mid-way existence between matter and thought, between silence and speech. It is not spiritual, it is not material, and though its articulations verge frequently on the province of language, it is smitten with eternal dumbness when it attempts to convey distinct and definite ideas. It exists entirely in the sphere of the feelings, press-

ing, as it were, on the confines of intellect, but never entering them, and going back to the founts of sensation, but never losing itself entirely in sense.

As I have often said elsewhere, I hate most cordially what are called musical people, though music to me has always been a source of inexpressible delight. The singer in the window opposite was unquestionably an Italian. Her voice might not technically have been pronounced of a high order, but it was full of sweetness, and extremely flexible. Every air, however, had the charms of melancholy about it, as if she were regretting some distant home, dwelling with fond recollection on companions from whom she had been parted for ever, to lead a monotonous and uncongenial life among persons of another creed in a harim.

LIII.

When dinner was announced, I descended to it with something like reluctance, the voice of the Italian songstress still sounding in my ears. But one must eat, and smoke, also, at least in Egypt. The natives generally find their pipes, with the addition of coffee, after dinner, luxury enough. But we from the West, while lying stretched on our soft divans, had goblets of claret poured out for us, and sipped from them as we smoked, every puff being rendered more delicious by a slight sense of weariness.

Late in the afternoon I went forth to see the Nile and the celebrated Gardens of Er-Rashid, lying south of the city, on the way to the Mosque of Aboumandour. This city is famous for its narrow, winding streets, in which I soon contrived to lose myself, that I might catch the first glimpse of the Nile apart from my companions, who attached no more interest to it than to a common ditch. Of course it is nothing but a collection of drops of water, like any other river, and those we behold flowing to-day, are entirely different from those into which the tears of captivity fell, when the Beni-Israel were detained involuntarily in the land of Goshen. But the imagination gives identity and almost conscious existence to such mighty streams, which have been so long associated with the fortunes of the human race. They appear to be numbered among its guardian spirits.

The breadth of the stream was immense, so that it looked almost like an arm of the sea, with numerous picturesque sails, moving up before the breeze, while others, equal in number, taking advantage of the current, were descending towards the Mediterranean. On the further shore stretched the groves and rice-fields of the Delta, looking like so many emerald parterres floating on the waves.

As I strolled along the banks, musing on the past and enjoying the present, I met a venerable old Arab, who, on my inquiring the way to the Gardens, offered to conduct me thither. Our path

lay through groves and copses, extending almost to the edge of the stream, and forming here and there little glades and arbours, in which it is possible at all hours of the day to obtain shelter from the sun.

This would seem to be a favourite haunt of the girls of Er-Rashid, of whom we saw many flitting through the distant avenues. One belonging to the humbler classes, having come forth in her single blue garment, to draw water from the Nile, had laid her jar upon the grass, and retired under the shade of a banana-tree, to be wooed by an ardent young Fellah, who appeared for the moment to have forgotten altogether the despotism and oppression of the Pasha. The old Arab, casting down his eyes, as if making love were a thing immoral in a Muslim woman, turned away, and walked, like the Levite in the parable, on the other side. The girl did not, however, remain long in the company of her lover, for we had not proceeded far, before she came tripping past us; descending to the stream, she filled her jar, placed it on her head, where it remained steady without the support of her hand, and went away singing towards the town.

LIV.

How other travellers have felt when entering the Gardens of Er-Rashid, they have explained for themselves, *tant bien que mal.* Possibly they may have been, like me, unable to describe their own

sensations. Pleasure was mingled with disappointment, delight with dole; excitement and admiration with regrets of various kinds. What I saw seemed to be a sort of vegetable mirage,—a vision of unreality,—a thing too beautiful to be enjoyed,—a lovely form from which the soul had fled,—a shrine deserted by the divinity.

In the days of old, when Egypt was a country, when it had a religion and a government of its own, however extravagant or imperfect, there were men and women in the land not unworthy to roam and meditate in this terrestrial paradise. Their imagination peopled the earth and air around them with gods, and for the accommodation of these celestial habitants, earth was kept clean and pure, such as the fancy delights to picture it among the earliest arbours of mankind.

As I stepped within the enclosure, I felt painfully the absence of the Egyptians. The pathways were neglected, the fallen leaves, piled here and there in heaps by the wind, were rapidly decomposing, and imparted a heavy sluggish feeling to the air. At intervals the banana-tree shook its gigantic leaves, while its clustering fruit, of a dark purple colour, exhaled an aromatic odour extremely pleasing to the sense. Here were thickets of mimosa, with foliage of delicate green; there groves of pomegranate, and orange, and lemon, and citron-trees, with date-palms of towering stature, rearing their long stems, and pendulous leaves,

and masses of golden fruit to meet the sun's rays, which came streaming richly upon them from the Desert of Libya. Below, the light seemed to render the fine green leaves transparent, as it shot through them, and fell in tremulous patterns on the greensward, or went down the slope till it spread over the broad Nile, and flooded it with glory. As was best, I could behold no termination to the gardens, but appeared to be wandering amid an endless succession of vistas, glades, avenues, winding tracks, bowers, arbours, and leafy arcades, some of which conducted the eye to the glittering surface of the river, others to the turquoise vault of heaven, which stretched its indescribable blue from one edge of the horizon to the other.

All wanting here was life. I seemed to have got into Eden just after the expulsion of our first parents, when everything was running to waste for want of some gentle attending hand. The design evidently presupposed persons with minds analogous to the spot, that is, filled with poetry and romance, and all that renders life lovely; and it is possible that Rosetta may contain persons of this description. Indeed my Arab conductor may have deserved to be reckoned among the favoured few, for every now and then, as we moved along, he paused and looked around him, and exclaimed in a voice full of solemnity: "How beautiful is the creation of God!" My friend and I wandered about, chatting a little occasionally, till the sun went down.

Hadrian ascended to the top of Etna to behold the dawn. He should have come to Rosetta to admire the beauties of the closing day. Never was sight more magnificent. Language refuses to supply me with terms sufficiently picturesque and delicate to delineate all the magical delusions of earth and sky. A rich glow—crimson suffused with saffron—ascended in broad streaks and radiations from the Desert, and traversing fields of emerald and amethyst, died away in a confusion of nameless colours on the immense arch of the zenith. Isis appeared once more to be enthroned in heaven, as the constellations, in clusters of bright gold, came forth flashing from the depths of the sky to terminate the prolonged twilight. A gentle breeze then sprang up from the Nile, which breathing between fruit and foliage, wafted clouds of evanescent fragrance on all sides.

In the midst of this intoxicating atmosphere, I returned towards Er-Rashid, where, in conformity with the custom of the East, my conductor accepted a small present, not to have offered which, would have been disrespectful, though it by no means constituted his motive for accompanying me. Had I omitted this ceremony, however, he would have been much hurt, because it would have been to him a sign that he had not contented me, or had been wanting in some point of politeness, on which Arabs of all ranks, more or less, pique themselves. We parted the best friends in the world, and

I returned to my caravanserai, where, to my extreme satisfaction, I found my friend Vere just arrived from Alexandria.

LV.

No one, perhaps, has ever investigated a thousandth part of his own associations, or been at the pains to watch the movements of his mind, when under the influence of familiar things. An anecdote is related of Sisygambis, the Persian queen, who on having purple and a distaff presented to her by Alexander of Macedon, burst into a flood of tears. It reminded her of happier days, when in the Harim of Darius she had amused herself with the humble task of spinning in the midst of her children.

Nothing can be more homely than cookery; nevertheless, as you watch its operations, you may sometimes be carried, God knows where, by the thoughts and reminiscences they suggest. Our travelling cook was an Arab of taciturn character, who made our pilaus and our coffee in silence. It was not, therefore, anything he said that put our ideas in motion, but the fumes of the Mokha and the mutton, exerting a most magical potency, carried my mind back to Lausanne, and then in the twinkling of an eye, to London. This power, called association, is the true Ariel, that can put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes. As the coffee-pot hissed and bubbled on the charcoal,

I found myself, I know not why, in the fields about Primrose Hill, where years before I had been used to stroll with my wife and the children. Picture after picture rose up before my mind's eye, till at length I was seated with all the young ones about me, and my wife on the grass at my feet, in that beautiful little grove of pine-trees crowning the lower heath at Hampstead.

There was probably some secret link connecting that pleasant spot with Er-Rashid. I remember to have sat there in the early days of my married life to watch the sun rise in summer, and to read at intervals Milton's gorgeous descriptions of the East. My thoughts had then, no doubt, projected themselves to the banks of the Nile, while now that I really was on those banks, they took the opposite direction, and carried me westward to Hampstead.

Morning in England has in itself an extremely poetical character, fresh, dewy, and largely invested with the power of inspiring buoyant spirits. This, of course, is peculiarly true, when the morning of the day moves hand-in-hand with the morning of life; when you sit, as it were, on the threshold of the Orient, and fancy you behold an interminable career traced out before you; when the wings of your thoughts have never been clogged with tears, but, like those of bees in June, go forth, fanning the sweetest flowers of life, and wafting home the honey to your heart. I shall never, in the same mood of mind, sit again at day-break on

Hampstead Heath, or revive the vision of the spot in the land of Isis. Shadows for me have passed over everything since then, rendering the sun less bright, and earth's flowers less fragrant; but the gardens of the mind do not fade, neither are its landscapes dimmed by time. The soul's domain is eternal in its nature, and a light brighter than that of Helios breaks upon it from on high.

Vere, generally full of meriment, was now sad, so we took our pipes into a corner, and reclining on the divan, began to chew in company the cud of sweet and bitter fancy. He had found much to struggle with in life, much to grieve over, very much to regret. At the time this was scarcely my case. I had lost, indeed, the friends of my childhood, and the hearth of my original home was desolate. But I had made in other lands a home for myself, and that was as bright and glorious with vitality as the hearth of man had ever been.

LVI.

Everybody knows that night on the borders of the tropics is full of extraordinary charms for persons of imaginative character. Vere would not always have been thought to belong to this category, but illness had now softened and sobered him down, and imparted a delicacy to his fancy which might have departed in robust health. Exchanging our pipes for cigars, we strolled out at

a late hour to gaze upon the Nile by moonlight. We had both come to the country with somewhat lofty ideas of its traditional resources, but when on this occasion we stood by the old river, my pleasurable sensations were far keener and deeper than I had anticipated. Everybody knows, I say, how beautiful the earth is in a balmy moonlight night—when the gigantic masses of foliage which rise here and there seem part of the sky into which they sink and are absorbed,—when the large, lustrous stars and constellations hang thick over the tops of the trees, or are beheld through openings between the leaves,—when there is not a vapour in the sky, through which the moon walks with white feet, like an everlasting queen,—when the breeze as it passes pours a soft and delicate fragrance into every channel of sense,—and when the soul becomes, as it were, material, and is converted into a mirror, reflecting the entire universe, and diffusing beneath and around it a sort of devouring brilliance, drawn from the records of human passion and the fiery ambition of human hopes.

To what did not the Egyptians in their fond superstition liken the Nile! Sometimes they spoke of it as the eagle, which, taking its flight from Jove's footstool, swept from south to north over Africa, imparting boundless fertility to whatever its shadow passed over. Sometimes it was Apis,—the Memphian Bull, which rendered prolific the terrestrial Isis, the name by which they designated

their beloved native land; sometimes it was in more expressed terms a god—the mimic of heaven, which by its beneficence and its bounty it appeared to realize upon earth.

As we now gazed upon it, broad, placid, tranquil, glittering and heaving timidly beneath the moon, while a thousand gentle ripples died murmuring at her feet, I felt a sort of affection springing up in me for the dear old stream, over which the shadowy bark of Isis had passed in mythological times, which had reflected the face of the Virgin and of Christ, whose waters had quenched the thirst of prophet, and patriarch, and Scythian, and Greek, and Roman, and still in boundless luxuriance flowed towards the central sea of ancient civilization.

And what is civilization on which we pride ourselves and vaunt so much? I had in my own person experienced all that it can, perhaps, do towards conferring happiness on the mind; had passed through the gilded saloons of grandeur, associated more or less with the *élite* of its intellects, and tasted whatever pleasures it can impart to man. Yet in the full blaze of society, surrounded by whatever is noblest or fairest in its dominions, I have never felt anything equal to the deep, hushed, concentrated delight I experienced on the banks of the silent Nile, with all God's stars looking down upon me from above, and all that earth holds of rare and excellent encircling me below. I cannot extort from memory or from language the means

of painting a complete picture of my thoughts and feelings at that moment. Looking towards the right, beyond the mosque of Aboumandour, I beheld rising above each other, on wavy eminences, the golden sands of the Desert, wafted thus far by the ceaseless winds of Africa; and my thoughts were by that glimpse hurried away through endless plains of barreniness and desolation.

There is a magic for me in the Desert, inexplicable by any philosophy I possess. Whenever I touch upon it, my frame appears to dilate, I breathe the air with tenfold pleasure, and seem to be already tasting the joys of immortality. God forbid that I should cherish feelings hostile to my species, or that I should desire to be placed beyond the reach of their kindness and sympathy. Still, it is most true that the serenest, happiest, and most delicious moments of my life, were those in which I stood alone or with a small band of wandering Arabs upon the skirts of the mighty Desert, which, as its image entered my soul, appeared to expand it to almost infinite dimensions.

There is a tyranny in civilization from which I seemed then to have escaped for ever. No necessity pressed me to think, or study, or write. Whatever is irksome in the daily drudgery of life had no existence for me. There was no visiting or being visited, no ceremonies, and indeed no duties but that of keeping alive in the heart good-will towards men. No doubt God is present everywhere,

but in the boundless wilderness you seem, like the prophet of old, to talk to Him face to face, as a man talketh with his friend. There is certainly nothing between you and your Maker. Solitude, silence, the absence of all life, as well as of everything that supports life, the infinite vault of heaven above, resting on every side upon the infinite desert below, transport you beside yourself, and give you ecstasies which it is possible the hermits of the Thebaid may have experienced, in which case I envy them their cells, their spare diet, and their unbroken contemplations.

Vere, a theologian by profession, was probably plunged in speculations analogous to my own, when we were both startled by a loud clear voice, inviting us in the most sonorous language of the East to turn our thoughts towards heaven. From many minarets at once the Muezzins exclaimed: "Arise, ye faithful, and pray—prayer is better than sleep!" and as the sacred sounds went sweeping over the broad Nile and entered the silent forests of the Delta, I felt my heart melt and my eyes moisten with devotion.

All have experienced, at one time or another, the irresistible power of the voice. For good or for evil, it is the most potent instrument under heaven. It softens, and bends, and moulds us, elevates our minds to the level of the loftiest hopes, or precipitates them into the obscure labyrinth of vice and voluptuousness. Here was I, the professor of another creed, nurtured in the cold

north, speaking another language, and possessed by feelings, hopes, and fears totally different from those of the Muezzins, caught up, as it were, out of the sphere of vulgar life, and rapt in celestial contemplations by the voices of a few solitary Muslims, standing in little aërial galleries on moon-lit towers, and inviting me unconsciously to join in their religious exercises; and yet my heart responded to their language, and if I did not unroll my prayer-carpet and prostrate myself upon the earth, my spirit immediately assumed the humblest posture, and sent up, I trust, the incense of no unworthy prayer towards God.

This life is made up of contrasts. On returning to our caravanserai, where most of the inmates had retired to rest, we were compelled to exercise our ingenuity to defend ourselves against the pests of Er-Rashid, the most fierce and vindictive of all mosquitos, from whose stings we cautiously and skilfully retreated behind our gauze curtains, leaving our lamps burning, that if sleeplessness should overtake us, we might be able, without difficulty, to kindle our pipes and pass away the hours till morning.

LVII.

No one can have traversed any portion of Egypt, without perceiving the importance of the donkey-boys, whose cooperation is as essential to the traveller as that of their beasts, and an extremely

curious race they are. Generally it is their lot to speak no language properly, but to accomplish in their persons the miracle of the tower of Babel, by effecting a complete confusion of tongues. A few words of Italian—a few words of Maltese—a few words of Spanish—a few words of modern Greek —a few words of Turkish—and a few words of English and French mixed, combined with the terminations of one language, engrafted on the roots of another, and the whole based on wretched Arabic; such is the jargon with which they address the traveller; "I say, Captain, questo dam good jackass:—montez, signor, lachez la bride;" and then poking a sharp stick into the animal's ribs, away you fly, while these half-naked, bare-footed young ragamuffins follow you, laughing, shouting, grinning and chattering, like so many imps of the devil.

This was fully exemplified the morning we quitted Er-Rashid. Starting considerably before the sun was up, we directed our course along the river's bank, by a narrow overhanging pathway, so uneven and broken by the lapsing of the sand that I fully reckoned upon sliding into the embraces of Osiris before we had proceeded many miles. As good luck, however, would have it, both the asses and ourselves managed to preserve the perpendicular, till by degrees the road widened and brought us out upon the Desert, the skirts of which were thickly interspersed with small lakes

and ponds, dotted with water-fowl, and fringed here and there with rushes and lotuses. At considerable distances we passed ruined mosques and minarets, marking the sites of old villages, which had now entirely disappeared beneath the ever-shifting sands of Libya. On our left lay the Delta, rich, fertile, and of an emerald green, with an endless succession of groves, and woods, and rice-fields, and canals and lakes—now and then a hamlet or a town, with innumerable saint's tombs, and turrets, and cupolas rising amid mimosa-thickets or palm-groves. After being long compelled to repress our impatience, we at Tifeny crossed over into this terrestrial paradise, and sat down to eat and smoke, amid a large cluster of orange-trees, with the fruit, pale-green and gold, hanging in tempting profusion over our heads.

Though no care had been taken to mow or water the grass, the turf was soft and mossy, so that the foot sank into it as into one of the prayer-carpets of the Persian Shah. Upon this exquisite patch of verdure, with the sunlight resting about us in beautiful tremulous patterns, made by the fruit and orange and citron leaves, we stretched ourselves at our ease, while the asses luxuriated on the fine grass which they helped to make soft and short for the next travellers.

Heat has always been to me a condition of happy existence, and I was now for the first time in my life in the true enjoyment of it. What may be

the case with others, I know not, but my own ideas and speculations appear to shrivel up in the cold. My very soul seems to resemble the spirits in the Dutchman's brandy in Nova Zembla, which, as the rigours of the climate increased, retreated inwards to escape them, till their whole force was concentrated in one fiery spot in the centre of the bottle. But heat is vitality, however the wise may explain it, and the equilibrium of the microcosm is consequently completest, when we move through a warm atmosphere, which takes out of us no more caloric than we can spare. Where the air is thus finely tempered, it is only out of respect for the theories of their neighbours that people go clad at all; and the inhabitants of the Delta, who are probably ignorant of what opinions prevail among the rest of the world, often obey their instincts and dispense with clothing altogether.

Of this we observed a striking example near a village on one of the great canals. All the men of the place, four or five hundred in number, were employed in cleansing the channel and raising and strengthening the embankment. They were, as Vere expressed it, as naked as robins, and, like Adam before the fall, were not ashamed, though their mothers, wives and daughters, who had brought them their dinners, were sitting in groups on the grass, assisting them while they ate, pouring out milk or water, or otherwise ministering to their comforts. Even the presence of strangers did not

appear to excite any new idea in their minds: whether it was poverty, or education, or philosophy, that reconciled them to the old theory of converting the climate into a great coat, I know not, but there, as I have said, they were, unsophisticated children of earth, forgetful apparently of the Pasha, and innocent of all acquaintance with mercers or tailors.

The women were by one remove nearer to civilization, for they each wore a blue chemise, open to the waist, and in most cases unfastened above, so as to exhibit the form of the bosom. Among the primitive Arabs, no objectionable ideas were connected with the exposure of the person, which, on the contrary, was evidently designed to be exhibited as nearly as possible in a state of nature, since all the women and girls were tattooed in a manner which could not have prevailed had they intended to wear garments. In many cases the breasts were covered with stars or flowers, while necklaces of the richest pattern encircled their throats. Bracelets and anklets also adorned their limbs, and the chin was marked with a verse or two from the Koran.

It must not, however, be inferred that these worthy Egyptians always appeared in this primitive condition. They did so from motives of economy, for their humble habiliments were piled on the canal bank, ready to be put on when the work of the day was over; and indeed, the nights in

northern Egypt are much too cold for people ever to think of imitating the fawns and satyrs.

LVIII.

Readers in general are little apt to sympathise with the sufferings of travellers, and in my case, very fortunately, there was little requiring sympathy. Had I been moving about in the golden age, I could, in general, scarcely have had less difficulties to contend with; still, as I have before remarked, I left Alexandria in a fever, which drew from one of my mercantile friends the observation, that under such circumstances he would not have undertaken to traverse the Delta for ten thousand pounds; but for some days I carried on the contest rather successfully, suffering no other inconvenience than that of not being able to eat and sleep as usual. At last, however, the fever threatened to obtain the upper hand; for, on arriving at a village, of which, at this moment, I forget the name, I found myself, to employ a classical expression, so completely floored, that I was obliged to be lifted off my donkey, while several of my companions spoke of pushing on to Cairo, and leaving me to the mercy of the Arabs.

As I had great faith in these marauding gentlemen, my uneasiness at this intimation was not great. To me the children of Ishmael have always been most kind and attentive, and I verily believe, that had I been left to their care, the men of the

village would have attended me like friends, while the women would have nursed me like sisters. Vere, however, by no means meant to reach the city of victory with the advanced guard, but observing, they might do as they pleased, said he should remain and read the burial-service over me in case of the worst.

For some time I sat on a mastabah of the coffee-house, and was then assisted into a little shed, where coffee, seasoned with cloves, was prepared for me. This scorched my throat like a draught from Phlegethon, and to heighten its effect I smoked the shisheh, which, sending down its fumes to the lungs, presently threw me into a violent perspiration, that oozing from every pore, found its way out through the burnoose. This, I believe, was what the sons of Hippocrates call the crisis, for while my frame appeared to be melting away, and becoming a sort of little Nile, health returned to me, so that I was soon enabled to rise and mount my beast with very slight assistance. I have not in my life had much experience of illness, so that I can remember better than persons who are more used to it the pleasures of recovery.

On the present occasion, as the fever left me, the earth seemed every moment to acquire additional beauty. This circumstance may have had something to do with my appreciation of the Delta, in an artistic point of view; but it strikes me that if I were a painter, I could have discovered a hundred

landscapes between Fouah and Cairo, which would not have been unworthy of the pencil of Claude.

LIX.

To be in fashion, I ought, perhaps, to have named some other artist, the current of opinion setting in just now against this delineator of the warm and genial south. But whatever happens, it is best to be honest. If my ideas offend the connoisseurs, I am sorry for it; but having myself beheld nature in her loveliest forms, both in the temperate and torrid zones, I may at least be allowed to judge whose pencil reminds me most of her serene splendour. The object of all art, is pleasure, which can only be awakened in us through the instrumentality of beauty, whether in the aspect ad ' colours of external nature, or in the symmetry of the human form.

To me, Claude in landscape, and Raffaelle in historical painting, appear to have worked most in conformity with this theory, and consequently to have produced the noblest and purest results. To derive enjoyment from looking at nature, is practically a simple process; but if we attempt to explain the laws by which the sources of delight are stirred within us, we find the whole apparatus of metaphysics scarcely equal to the task. It is the same precisely with the mimetic arts. When I stand, for example, before one of Claude's landscapes, supposing my mind to have been previously agitated

by the perturbing influence of the passions, the storm begins immediately to subside, while a serenity like that of a sweet summer's day takes its place. The beauty, snatched as it were from nature, and rendered permanent by art, sinks into the soul, and through a law or force inexplicable to me, disposes it irresistibly to assume that unruffled composure necessary to its reflecting properly the external image, to the magic of whose influence it is for the time subjected.

No other landscape-painter accomplishes this triumph so invariably and completely as Claude. Salvator Rosa appeals with singular power to our sympathy for wild and savage nature, chasms, mountain-torrents, sombre and frowning crags, dark forests, with the figures of fierce banditti looming through their obscurity. Nicholas Poussin* awakens our classical or scriptural reminiscences, revives the impression of our school-boy days, or, which is still more, carries us back to those moments of unmixed delight, when on our mother's knee we first lisped through the marvellous traditions of Palestine and the East.

But they, neither of them, put us in possession

* To this great painter the French have recently (Sunday, June 15, 1851) erected a statue at Andelys, in Normandy, his native place. It was consecrated by religion, and some of the most distinguished personages in the country coveted the honour of being present at the inauguration.—"*The Times*," *June* 19*th*, 1851. . . . . I do not recollect that any statue has hitherto been erected to Claude.

of that sunshine of the breast which streams in upon us, or is kindled by the works of Claude, who felt all that is serene and lovely in the countenance of our mother earth, and has represented his conceptions in colours which we must grieve to think should ever fade. His architecture, his seas, his glassy rivers, his mountains, blue and hazy with distance, his skies, full of light and brilliance, his trees, displaying every variety of forest beauty, his foregrounds, copses, flowers, weeds and all, fresh, dew-dripping, and almost exhaling fragrance as we look on them, so full are they of suggestions to the sense as well as to the mind,—this combination of things, I say, acts like a glorious poem on the imagination, and hushes it into a rapt feeling, not unakin to devotion. My friend, Linton, especially in his Venetian pictures, is every year giving fresh proofs that he has been drinking at the same great fountain. His sunsets are delicious, his ruins seem to crumble before the eye, and his waves, leaping, cool and translucent, transport us forcibly to the shores of the Mediterranean.

LX.

Words are poor things for the purpose of painting, in comparison with ochre and ultramarine, unless one possesses the art of inducing the reader to make pictures for himself. But on the evening, as I remember well, of leaving my fever-village, I stood on a lofty stone bridge, or rather sat on my

donkey's back, and looking around me, was literally transported into forgetfulness of time and place by the exquisite features of the scene. Towards the left a large river, not the less beautiful for being artificial, went winding away beneath the evening sun, now spreading, now contracting, now hidden by foliage, now flowing on in free majesty, till lost in the blue distance. To the right, numerous villages, saints' tombs, mosques, minarets, and cupolas, rendered ruddy and glowing by the rich light streaming upon them from the west, were beheld through openings in the woods; while immediately before me stretched a succession of wheat and rice fields, of the freshest and brightest green, terminating in the distance on the edge of spreading lakes, dotted with islands, and reflecting the crimson clouds which lost themselves among palm-groves, mimosa-copses, and masses of mighty sycamores, richer and more towering than the oak.

An abundance of clouds were generally ready towards evening to multiply the features of the picturesque, piling themselves behind the woods into mimic mountains, seeming, for the moment, every whit as real as the Alps, which, at sunset, often assume the appearance of being transparent, and ready to melt into the air or float away like vapour. It must have been some ridge of this aërial substance that suggested to the poets of antiquity the idea of Olympos; for the stupendous eminences on which I gazed in the Delta, of purple,

amethyst, ruby, saffron, green and gold, disposed in glittering terraces, rising above each other and connected by easy pathways of emerald, conducting the eye upwards like a Titan, till it scaled the heavens and seemed to penetrate into the empyrean, were worthy to be the habitations of gods.

LXI.

At the village where we rested that night, I observed a trait of manners not by any means common among the Arabs: several sheikhs or elders of the place came to the strange, half-ruined tenement where we lodged, for the purpose, as they said, of reading some papers by the light of our candles, they having none of their own.

This, as we conjectured from the beginning, was a stratagem; of course they thought it would not be difficult to throw dust in the eyes of a few infidels, who believed not in the Book, and had never been circumcised. This limited the extent of their Jesuitism, so that in a short space of time they came to the point, and boldly requested the honour of drinking our healths in wine or even in brandy. If I had not taken the pledge on quitting Iskenderea, I had, which was nearly the same thing, made up my mind to swallow as much of Osiris as I could during my stay in the country. I had, therefore, brought with me neither jar nor bottle, and stood before the sheikhs of the village as temperate as a patriarch. It was, accordingly,

beyond my power to oblige them; though acquainted with the habits of Franks in general, they inwardly, no doubt, accused me of prevarication and inhospitality. What I had, however, I offered them; a pipe of good gebeli, and a cup of coffee, which, as they could get nothing better, they accepted.

While they were sipping the Mokha, I endeavoured to prevail with my companions, who had stores of wine and spirits, and who, in general, were far from niggardly, to share their intoxicating riches with these bearded sages of the Delta, but to no purpose. Instead of complying with my request, they wished to play off on the sheikhs a practical joke, and give them, though in this they were overruled, some Eau de Cologne instead of gin.

Our guests having retired, we sat down to supper on some of the most delicious game that epicure ever tasted; teals, plovers, and magnificent wild ducks, with other birds peculiar to the country. Strange to say, the Arab cooks are great gastronomers, and serve up their dishes in a style which would not have displeased Elagabalus himself. It is a sad thing to own, but truth is truth; and I confess that I used to look forward to those evening meals with no small satisfaction. First, the thirty-five or forty miles we usually travelled during the day, made us just weary enough to long for rest. When we reclined, therefore, on our rude divans, sucking in the smoke of the shisheh, and

inhaling, like the gods of Olympos, the sweet-smelling savour, ascending in clouds from pots and kettles to our nostrils, we really were objects of envy even to aldermen.

This I noticed, particularly after my fever left me. It seemed to have bequeathed as an inheritance a sort of wolfish appetite, which, in lieu of something better, would have enabled me to eat the cook himself, withered and weather-beaten as he was. Vere once proposed that we should knock him down and turn New Zealanders over his remains. But this enviable fate, poor fellow, he escaped, to be buried, I dare say, not more than a foot deep, in some wretched Egyptian cemetery, where the jackals in all probability pulled him out before he had been half an hour comfortable in his grave, and picked his bones as clean as a whistle. He was about the most lugubrious Muslim I ever saw. Probably he was scrupulous and fanatical, and in serving us only submitted to necessity, though he may have been somewhat reconciled to his fate by the numerous opportunities he enjoyed of spoiling the Egyptians,—at least he had the reputation, poor fellow, of being a great thief; not that there is any difficulty in arriving at such a reputation among travellers in general, who, though I say it that should not—are about as thorough adepts in scandal as Mrs. Candour herself.

It is mere luck, I suppose, but in all my travels I have fallen in with light-hearted and honest

fellows. A few exceptions no doubt have turned up now and then, but only just enough to make me observe the difference between good and bad. Among the Arabs, for example, whom it is the fashion to anathematize as thieves, cheats, robbers, murderers, and heaven knows what, I scarcely met with anything but generosity, probity and kindness. If I had been a rich man, the reader might possibly have attributed my belief to one of two things: either that I was sufficiently regardless of money to let people take whatever they liked without noticing it, or that I was too obtuse of perception to know when I was cheated.

In my case, however, a supposition of this kind would be absurd. Nothing makes a man so completely wide awake in the matter of paras and piastres as being obliged now and then to count them, to see whether your stock is likely to hold out to your journey's end. I was not, I confess, much addicted to this operation, but still Mammon and I were constrained to enter into calculations occasionally, that I might be able, as the phrase is, to make both ends meet. In this—I say it with entire deference to those quick-sighted travellers who think differently—I was greatly assisted by the honesty and friendliness of the Arabs. They, I verily believe, would, in many instances, have served me for nothing, could they have existed under such circumstances and had I been willing to permit them.

Of course men's experience in these matters will often differ, but I deeply commiserate those persons who, the moment they leave their own country, imagine they must necessarily be moving among rogues, and, therefore, spend the greater part of their time in watching like dragons over their purses. I took it for granted that I should be cheated a little now and then, and was prepared to submit with extreme resignation to my destiny. The gold I carried out was not meant to be hoarded up, but to be distributed right and left among the sons and daughters of poverty, who might be kindly disposed to assist me on my way. I did not grudge them their share of it, God knows, and always wished for their sakes it had been ten times more, especially among the Arabs, who, Muslims as they were, and, therefore, no doubt booked for the devil, invariably treated me with kindness and consideration.

LXII.

There are, of course, many classes of travellers, but they may still be divided into two sorts, the prudent and the imprudent. To which of these divisions I belong, the reader will long ago have discovered. On the present occasion, having but very imperfectly recovered from a fever, if indeed I could be said to be recovered at all, I put the matter beyond dispute by going forth considerably

after dark, while the dew was falling fast, to roam about the village, just to see how it looked when everybody else was in bed. I had, of course, a good stick with me to protect the legs of my trowsers against the dogs, extremely numerous and troublesome in the Delta, above all to strangers. As I passed by several houses, and heard deep sonorous voices engaged in dialogue, with others of a much sweeter character, I thought I would have given much to know what they were talking about. Here and there light streamed forth through chinks in the doors, possibly where there was sickness within; some worthy Muslim watching by his wife's bed-side, or some mother sitting up with her child. The same incidents of life are multiplied all over the earth, because the sorrows and joys of humanity are spun, as it were, from the same fleece.

I proceeded, verging, as I remember, towards the right, till I came to the village wall, which, high in general, was here considerably dilapidated, so that it was possible to mount and descend into the country on the other side. This I did, as far as I can discover, with no particular object; but the opportunity offering, I thought it best to avail myself of it, and stroll forth into the open fields in that beautiful hour of the night.

Just inside of the wall, near the breach through which I made my exit, stood a large square building with many windows, and in some of the

upper ranges there were lights. In these I heard women singing merry and festive songs, interrupted by much clapping of hands and shouts of laughter; I could never discover, though I made several inquiries, what that building was, or why people met there to amuse themselves at so late an hour. Compared with the other dwellings, it had the appearance of a palace or a fortress, but there was no one there to occupy the former, nor was there anything in the circumstances of the village to need the latter.

As I descended over the fragments of the ruined wall, I observed by the starlight something like a pathway leading to a small thicket at some distance. Towards this I bent my course, and found it to surround a pool of water, which looked clear and pure, and reflected the stars from its unruffled surface. From this pond I still wandered on, going all the while away from the village, till I at length perceived a faint glimmer amongst the trees. If I had considered before proceeding, I should probably have turned back; but eager to know what any one could be doing there at such a time, I quickened my steps in the hope of gratifying my curiosity. Presently I reached a plot of ground, far more carefully cultivated than the surrounding country. It lay within an enclosure of prickly pear-trees, which I entered through a small gate. Here and there rose tall palms, encircled at the foot by mimosas, and it was

from among these that the light streamed forth, bright and sparkling. My ear now caught a low murmuring sound, like the ripple of running waters, or the murmurs of a voice broken by many sorrows.

The question then presented itself to my mind, ought I to beat a retreat? I experienced a sort of uncomfortable sensation, and felt instinctively for my pistols, as though I might shortly be in want of them. Finding they were safe in my girdle, I took confidence and went straight towards the lamp. Sometimes, however, I found it necessary to turn, first in one direction then in another, as the track I followed wound through the interior of the grove. The light appeared and disappeared by fits, but at length I came to a small building, partly tomb, partly oratory, and the door being open, I looked in and beheld a man kneeling on a prayer-carpet before a large bright lamp, placed aloft in a niche in the wall. His orisons were uttered in a gentle voice, and the first glance revealed to me that he was not a native of the country. His features were more prominent than those of the Arabs, and his large, dark, lustrous eyes, seemed to flash and kindle as the rays fell upon them. Before him on the matting lay a jewelled poignard and a book, and when he had ceased praying, he took the book in his hand, and sitting down began to read.

He then rose up and moved to a corner of the

oratory, where I observed an upright stone at the head of a long broad slab, around which he walked three times, muttering in a low voice the name of God, groaning deeply and striking his breast. He then, ascending a narrow flight of steps, took down the lamp from the niche, and proceeding towards a door in the wall, would in another moment have disappeared, had I not uttered the salutation and entreated his permission to enter. No way discomposed or startled, he returned me the salutation of peace, and said, "Come in, O stranger, and share the hospitality of one of the humblest among the slaves of God."

While pronouncing these words a slight contest, though of what nature I know not, appeared to be going on in his mind. At length, having scrutinised me carefully from head to foot, he bade me follow him, and proceeding through a low arched corridor, entered a small apartment, which in the highest degree excited my surprise.

Along three sides of it ran a low divan of scarlet cloth with deep fringe, and at the further end, covered with a white asmar, lay a young woman asleep.

"That, O stranger," said he, "is my daughter, and I will awaken her, and she shall light our pipes, and we will make merry, for you shall not leave me this night."

So he went up to the divan, and shook her

gently, and she awoke. Perceiving me, however, she looked alarmed, and covered herself hastily with her veil. But her father said to her:—

"Child, get up, and make this stranger, whom God hath sent to us, taste, in this half-barbarous country, the hospitality of Persia, as superior to that of the Osmanlis, as the peak of the Elburz is to the plain of Mazenderan."

"Verily, my father," replied she, "he is himself an Osmanli, and it is not well to make this observation in his presence."

"No, child," answered the Persian, "he is indeed one of the children of the faithful," a compliment I owed to my long black beard and Egyptian costume, "but no Osmanli."

He then looked inquiringly, and I smiled assent, after which we both sat down together on the divan, while the beautiful Azizi filled our pipes, put on charcoal, and presented them to us. We now began to smoke, while she, lighting a little, round, portable furnace, proceeded to prepare coffee.

It is wonderful to notice the grace and elegance of an Oriental lady,—especially when through change of fortune she is constrained to descend to the performance of those domestic duties from which she was originally exempt. Azizi was tall and slight, elegantly shaped, with a face of singular loveliness; a profusion of black hair floated over her shoulders, while her eyes, like those of most Persians, were bright and almond shaped,

with long lashes and eyebrows pencilled like arches. Having been brought up in Egypt, she, fortunately, spoke Arabic, otherwise she would have been dumb to me.

The coffee being ready, she served it up in small finjans of purple and gold, placed in zerfs of silver fillagree, brought, apparently, from the country of the Malays. She then sat beside us on the divan, and entered into conversation, displaying a reach and delicacy of thought extremely rare among women in Egypt. Her phraseology was enriched with expressions from the poets, the turn of her mind was original, her metaphors were so bold, as to be sometimes startling, while her sentiments were so pure and elevated, that she seemed to belong to the reforming sect of the Desert.

Presently, at a sign from her father, she took up an instrument of music, and touching it exquisitely, sang a Persian air, which, though of a cheerful character, made the tears run down his cheeks, and so affected her own voice, that she was unable to complete it.

Here in the north we dislike to yield outwardly to sorrow, even when we feel it most. But the Orientals find a luxury in shedding tears, and indulge in it, both men and women, to a degree which must always astonish persons of colder temperament. They have on this subject a theory, which may not be altogether without truth; namely, that while the great and the noble weep without

reserve, those of selfish, narrow, and little souls are incapable of displaying this token of grief.

And no doubt tears in themselves are most beautiful, especially when the fragrance of repentance or love is united with their brightness. They seem to wash away the stains of the soul, and to restore it to that unsullied purity which it knew before the fall. All that is loved, loveable, or sweet in humanity, has been cradled and as it were bathed in tears. We are ushered into the world with tears, wrung by the birth pangs from the eyes of our mothers; with tears do they watch over us in infancy, when pain and sickness visit our frail bodies; and afterwards, whatever feeling is deepest in life, whether joy or sorrow, tears are sure to hallow it, to show how close in our nature the fountains of delight lie to those of anguish. Finally, when we stand on the last verge of time, and are about to put off upon the fathomless and boundless ocean of eternity, the tears of those who love us pour round our departing souls, and often drop upon the cold clay after the spirit has deserted it for ever.

Let no one, therefore, be ashamed of tears, which are the surest inheritance of humanity, and are shed most freely by those, perhaps, who have the largest hearts, the widest sympathies, and the strongest love for their fellow-creatures.

Among the manuscripts of my friend Sir James Brooke there is connected with this subject a little poem, full of delicacy and tenderness, which the

reader, I am sure, will thank me for introducing here :—

"Ahi! null altro che pianto al mondo dura."

"Ambition's path may vainly cheat,
Ecstatic love be passing sweet,
Gay hope with her delusive train,
A moment soothe and cheer the brain,
Yet nothing lasts but tears.

"Friends may be cherish'd, fond and true;
Affection's ties, like morning dew,
And pleasure's cup be quaff'd awhile,
With dimpled cheek and wreathed smile,
Yet nothing lasts but tears.

"As pleasure's poison'd cup we drain,
We find the dregs of woe and pain,
Ambition's dream is quench'd in blood;
Time's hand will pluck hope's wither'd bud,
For nothing lasts but tears.

"O'er friends we love, the fond, the brave,
We live to close the yawning grave,
Affection's dew, which gemm'd each leaf,
Sinks blighted by the touch of grief,
For nothing lasts but tears."

LXIII.

I am myself very much inclined to follow, in most cases, the example of my neighbours, and, therefore, without understanding why Azizi and her father wept, I shared heartily in their unknown sorrow, and wept too. This won their hearts. The Persian, starting from the divan, came to me, and, taking my hands in his, said :—

"O stranger, who should rather be called my friend, since you weep for me, and with me, know then that within a few paces of where we now are, lies all this world ever possessed of precious to me, if I except this child, who is also precious for her sake. I am a man of many griefs; I have done and suffered much evil, and now I wait here the commands of God to depart, and endure whatever may be appointed. But first I would behold this dear one provided for, and then would gladly join that other Azizi in the tomb, to appear together before the Compassionate and the Merciful, that we might receive our lot, and be gathered to those with whom destiny shall join us after death."

"Father!" cried Azizi; "the heart of the stranger is contracted. Instead of showing him hospitality, we have compelled him to share our sorrows, and converted the moments which should have been pleasant into sources of pain."

"It is often thus, my child," answered the Persian; "we sow seed in the dark, and know not when they spring up, what fruit they shall bear. I invited this, our guest, to spend the night with us in enjoyment, and, lo, the reverse has happened."

"My friends," said I, "all human beings are linked together by sympathy, which, in whatever land we may be born, makes us brethren and sisters. It would ill become me, therefore, to be gay, or to desire gaiety, while the recollection of calamity overwhelms your spirits with sadness

One favour, however, I would ask, which is, that you will tell me why you are sad, and what strange fate has conducted you hither from Irán."

"The night is long," answered the Persian, "and it will be to me pleasant to retrace the events of my life, upon the memory of which alone I now live. Azizi, my child, you will sleep while your father unlocks the fountain of his sorrows, and describes the way in which fate has led him from the splendours of a palace in Bagdad to the chamber of a tomb in the Delta of Egypt."

"No, my father," replied Azizi; "there will be time enough for sleep hereafter; now let my soul be awake, that I may engrave on my heart the story of that love to which I owe my existence. I am the shadow of the Azizi that was, left by the Compassionate, that your heart may not be entirely empty. Relate, therefore, O my father, how it came to pass that we found our way to this strange land, now rendered holy and beautiful by the ashes which have been deposited in it. The image of my mother appears to hang in the dawn, and in the twilight, and from this point the road to heaven seems brighter than from any other. The home of the heart is where the heart's treasures lie. God has sanctified this spot to you and to me, and here, if anywhere on earth, we may be happy."

LXIV.

"I was born," said the Persian, "in Bagdad, where my father, a merchant of great riches, had built himself a palace, and laid out gardens, and prepared to spend the remainder of his days in contentment and affluence. He had a sister, whom he dearly loved, and she had been married to a merchant, one of his friends, and died young, leaving behind her one only daughter. The name of this daughter was Azizi, and the fame of her beauty spread through all Persia, where the poets, when they wrote verses to their mistresses, thought they could say nothing more flattering than to compare them to Azizi of Bagdad.

"Being near relatives, we had been suffered from childhood to be much together, so that it might be said, our affection dated from the cradle. I am not in some respects a man like other men, and therefore, instead of learning, as I made improvement in science and philosophy, to despise my cousin because she was a woman, and because she was shut out from the experience of the world, I looked upon her as the morning star, which is bright by its own lustre, and requires no reflected light from any other luminary. All that the noblest and purest soul can possess, she had inherited from God. Learning could not have improved her, nor philosophy rendered her wiser. She was complete in

herself, and her crystal soul mirrored all nature, and melted it, as it were, into its own purity.

"The wildest flights of my ambition, therefore, never carried me beyond the idea of making this unparalleled creature my wife; but while I hoped, I almost dreaded to speak of this union, having a secret feeling that there is a Nemesis, which will not suffer us in this world to taste of unadulterated felicity. Azizi was tall and fair, and her large eyes appeared, as they looked upwards, to catch inspiration from heaven: She had, from a child, been taught to read, but instead of employing her time, like many of her sex, in acquainting herself with the thoughts of trivial writers, she devoted her leisure to the study of the Koran, and was desirous of being versed in the knowledge of the relations of man to God.

"According to her ideas, the body of the beautiful is a sort of chalice in which the Almighty has poured a portion of his own essence; for which reason we are to watch over its purity with sleepless zeal and diligence, that we may return it back at death in the state in which we received it.

"A little before the time fixed upon for our marriage, her father journeyed to the capital, where he was received into the house of the Wuzeer, with whose wife and daughters Azizi soon contracted a sort of friendship. It happened that there existed an intercourse between the ladies of the Minister and those of the Court, so that by degrees the

Shah heard of the beauty of my affianced bride, and immediately conceived the desire of including her amongst his women. He therefore sent to the house of the Wuzeer, and in spite of the protestations of her father, who said she was already before God the wife of another, took her away by force, making our faces black for ever.

"After this calamity, the father of Azizi would not return to Bagdad, but took obscure lodgings in the city, where he shortly afterwards died, bequeathing all his property to me. What, however, was wealth under these circumstances? One only feeling took possession of my mind—that of revenge—and all my thoughts were employed in discovering the means of gratifying it.

"You will easily understand, that for a subject of Persia to punish the Shah upon his throne, is a thing not easy of accomplishment, but I resolved to devote my whole life to the task; and as he had blighted my hopes, and planted incurable sorrow in my breast, I determined to make him experience the same pangs, and without taking away his life, render it impossible for him, with all the wealth of a kingdom at his command, to woo back peace and contentment to his pillow. I therefore sold all my estates, and palaces, and houses, and purchasing costly jewels with the produce, placed them on a mule, and departed for the capital.

"There I took a small house, and concealing the bulk of my treasures in the earth, reserved for

my present purposes ten thousand pieces of gold, with the aid of which I did not doubt I should compass my revenge.

"I had all my life applied myself diligently to the study of mechanics, and now set about constructing a throne, which, for the beauty and singularity of its structure, should excite the admiration of all who beheld it. I laboured night and day, and succeeded so much beyond my hopes that I often stood still for a moment to admire my own handy-work. It appeared as if I had achieved a miracle, the silver and the gold, the ivory and the gems with which it sparkled, combined so happily as to produce a wonderful effect upon the eye. Through Teheran nothing was talked of but the throne of Hussein, so that throngs of people came daily to my shop to admire the splendour of the workmanship.

"In a short time the fame of my achievement reached the Shah, who, having little to occupy his thoughts, and always, therefore, on the look out for novelty, naturally desired to possess it, and sent certain of his officers to inquire what price I demanded for my throne. I replied, that it was for my own use, and not for sale; that it pleased me to sit upon it, and there to wield an invisible sceptre over an invisible kingdom which was subject to me.

"When the Shah heard this, he said: 'Verily this mechanician is a madman, though he surpasses all other men in ingenuity. We must proceed our-

self to see his production. He will be dazzled by our presence, and yield us up the throne, without which our felicity would be incomplete.'

"Next day, therefore, the Shah with a number of his courtiers came to my house, and when I had withdrawn a covering from the throne, he burst forth into raptures and exclaimed:—

"'This, indeed, is one of the wonders of the world! I knew not I possessed among my subjects a man of so much genius. Take, Hussein,' said he, 'a hundred thousand tomans for the produce of thy invention, and I will promote thee, and give thee titles, and thou shalt be among the first grandees of Persia.'

"But I replied, 'If your Majesty were to give me one half of your dominions, I would not part with this throne; for know, that I also am a king, though my subjects belong to the invisible world, and when I sit down upon it, and extend my sceptre to the four corners of heaven, the spirits that are subject to me throng into this place, and I can dispose of their energies as I list, either to enrich myself or others. No amount of gold, therefore, would be an equivalent for this throne, which imparts to him who possesses it, with the secret of its use, a power greater than that of all the monarchs of the world.'

"This speech only excited a stronger desire in the Shah to obtain what he wanted. He, therefore, said to me:—

"'Name thy price, for verily it must be mine. There is nothing I will not concede to thee, for thy genius is wonderful, and I shall neither eat nor drink till thou hast consented to gratify my wishes.'

"'There is one favour,' answered I, 'which if your majesty grant me, the throne with its marvellous secrets shall be yours.'

"'Name it,' cried the Shah; his eyes dilating and sparkling with delight.

"'It is hard to grant,' answered I, assuming a humble and dejected air.

"'I care not, Hussein,' exclaimed the Shah, 'for I swear by my beard, and the beard of the Prophet, I will refuse thee nothing.'

"'Then,' said I, 'it is only this: let me cause the throne to be conveyed into your Majesty's harim. Command all the eunuchs and officers to be sent away, and suffer me to be there, when, in the midst of your women, and in the presence of your queen, you ascend the throne to dazzle their eyes by the exhibition of the grandeur of your person.'

"When I had uttered these words the Shah laughed. 'Thy wish shall be gratified. Order thy workmen to prepare to carry the throne to my palace, and do thou accompany it, for verily I will concede to thee thy wishes, and thou shalt be happy in the sight of the collected beauty of Persia.'

"I bowed profoundly, and the Shah and his courtiers left me and returned to the palace.

"Revenge is a blind passion, unworthy, as meditation has since disclosed to me, of all who fear God or respect their own souls; but I was then under the dominion of the spirit of vengeance, and would have hazarded everything, both in this world and the next, to compass my design. May the Compassionate have mercy on me! All my ideas had been absorbed in one; all my feelings, all my wishes, all my hopes! 'Grant me,' said I, in an impious prayer; 'but the satisfaction of triumphing over the Shah, of making him feel the sting of those sorrows and regrets which have devoured my peace, and let me perish the next moment, I care not!'

"In this temper of mind, I proceeded with my invention to the palace, where, to do him justice, the Shah punctually fulfilled his engagement.

"When the throne had been set up in the principal apartment of the harim, and the Shah had, with great pride and satisfaction, seated himself on it, the eunuchs were dismissed, and all those ladies who stood in any favour with his Majesty received orders to assemble before him. I stood at one end of the royal divan and watched the entrance of these beauties, as the man doomed to be beheaded watches the approach of the executioner. My thought before they appeared was: 'Will she, the beloved of my soul, be among them? Should she be there, however tarnished and polluted, my soul shall be content. I will snatch her from this

tyrant. I will bear her with me far away, and we will weep together in solitude and obscurity over the ruins of our mutual love. She was born to be all in all to me, and it shall never be said that Hussein indulged any other thought than that of exclusive and devoted love for Azizi.'

"While these ideas were passing through my mind, I watched the distant portal with intense trembling and anxiety. My heart seemed to dilate in my breast as I fancied I beheld her among the other ladies, and then, when disappointed, contracted again, and seemed to be extinguished within me.

"Presently she came, her majestic figure still more majestic, her bearing more haughty, her glance more assured and uplifted. I saw in a moment that whatever she might have endured, no pollution had passed over her soul. Yet there she was, in what position I knew not. All the fires of Gehenam, therefore, were kindled in my mind, and in my rage I frequently touched the handle of the poignard that lay like a serpent under my girdle. But I suppressed my fury, till at length the queen entered and placed herself on a throne beside her husband. The Shah then said to me:—

"'Now, Hussein, fulfil thy promise; disclose to me the secret of this throne, and I swear to thee there is nothing a Muslim should ask that I will not bestow on thee.'

"Ages of speech would not enable me to unfold the torrent of feelings which at that moment swept

through my breast. I advanced towards the throne, and taking from my pocket a small golden instrument, touched a spring which lay concealed among the embossing of its side, and instantly the figures of serpents in gold and steel sprang forth from the cavities in which they had been hidden, and clasped the Shah about, so that he became incapable of the slightest motion. A dragon with red and threatening tongue passed over his beard, and planting one claw on the top of his head and the other under his chin, held him firmly bound as in a vice. His mouth was closed, so that he could not utter a word, but finding himself thus a prisoner, he rolled his eyes fiercely, and became purple with rage.

"It was now my turn to triumph, and I said with a loud voice, 'If there be any woman here who loves Hussein of Bagdad, let her come forward and reveal her feelings.' Azizi, who had been scarcely able to sustain her own weight through the violence of her sensations, now rushed towards me and threw herself in my arms. This was a moment of the deepest agony. She read my thoughts, and while I embraced her, whispered three words in my ear, which raised me in happiness above all the Shahs and Sultans of the earth. It was with difficulty I could now play out the part I had undertaken, but summoning all the energy of my soul, I commanded my feelings and said to her:—

"'It is enough. Be seated on the divan, and thou shalt witness the punishment of the Shah. Life for life—blood for blood—happiness for happiness!'

"I then went up to his majesty, and in a voice as calm as I could assume, said to him:—

"'Oh wicked Shah! Look around this room, and behold the number of women in your possession. I was your subject—I loved but one, whom I had worshipped from childhood—I built upon the possession of her all the hopes and felicity of this life, and perhaps, also, my preparation for a better. You heard of her beauty—you were told of her engagement to me; yet, making use of the force which God had bestowed on you for good, you committed evil, and came and took from me this sole treasure of my heart, which, if anything could degrade virtue, you have soiled and degraded. But by the soul of the Prophet, the very chamber which beheld the wrong, shall likewise witness the punishment. We will part equal from this room, and our reminiscences during the remainder of our days shall be of the same colour.'

"The women, who evidently understood my menace, seemed annihilated with terror, and the queen, who certainly loved him, nearly fainted on her throne; but I went up to her, and taking her by the hand, said, 'Fear not! O wife of this wicked Shah! I am an obscure man—one of the

children of the merchants, but, behold, God has given me a soul greater and nobler than his. I have sworn to be avenged, and the means of vengeance are in my hands, but the strength of my love for the cherished of my soul, and my reverence for the sex to which she belongs, restrain the tempest of my fury. I rise above your husband, and forgive him. Let him remember, however, that his honour was in my power, and that I spared him, not, I swear, through any respect for his sceptre or fear of his revenge, for I spit at his beard and defy both; but because I desired to preserve the consciousness of unsullied faith towards Azizi, whose beauty, like the sun, unclosed the flower of my heart, and with whose setting it shall close for ever.'

"Then, taking Azizi by the hand, I said, 'Let us fly from this accursed place; and you, Madam,' I added, addressing the queen, 'accompany us to the exit from the harim, where I will place in your hands the means of liberating your husband. Let no idea of pursuit enter your mind, for behold,' said I, as I scattered certain little balls around the apartment, 'these instruments of vengeance will presently ignite and set this palace in a blaze. I will strew every apartment as I retreat, so that the vengeance of Hussein shall be recorded in history to the latest day given to man here below.'

"So saying, I made my escape, and it being then night and unusually dark, I was enabled,

without obstruction, to reach my home, where I dug up my vast treasure of jewels, and carefully disguising both Azizi and myself, we fortunately contrived to escape from Teheran, and wandering through the plains and mountains, at length reached Diarbekr, and passing thence into Syria, came, by way of Damietta, to this spot. To place myself under the protection of religion, I took upon me the habit of a Derwish, and the care of a Saint's tomb; and here Azizi lived and here she died, shedding inexpressible bliss over her Hussein, who now only waits for one event to join her in Paradise. My treasures are undiminished, for the charity of the faithful has more than sufficed for our support. Come, friend, descend with me into the vault beneath this tomb, and I will show thee what the merchants of Persia have amassed for themselves and their children."

Azizi, who knew the way, took up a lamp and preceded us. Going towards the further corner of the divan, she lifted it up and disclosed a little iron door, which her father unlocked and raised with some difficulty. We then descended a winding flight of steps, and at length reached a small vaulted apartment, which was perfectly dry and pleasant, and here, in a number of caskets, which could all easily be put into one, I beheld a quantity of jewels, which, as it appeared to me, would have purchased the whole of Egypt. The diamonds, the emeralds, the carbuncles, the rubies, the ame-

thysts, and chalcedonies, the jaspers, the opals and the turquoises, flashed and glittered in the rays of the lamp, creating a mimic fire by the mixture of their irradiations.

"These," said Hussein, "are the portion of Azizi. But she must not remain in this land; she must return to Persia, recover the palace of her forefathers in Bagdad, and reinstate, if possible, the family of the Yarmaks in the position they occupied from the time of the martyrdom of the two holy ones," (alluding to the murder of Hassan and Hussein.)

We then quitted the vault, and returned to our pipes and coffee. I now examined more attentively the figure and countenance of Azizi, who possessed a beauty so rare, that you might travel through the whole boundaries of Asia without finding its equal. I may as well in this place complete her story. Having promised her father to return on my passage down the river, to spend a few days with them, I strictly adhered to my engagement. I, however, found the tomb deserted, the iron door leading to the vault lying open, and the leaves of trees and the dust of the neighbouring plains beginning to accumulate in the apartment, which had so lately been rendered lustrous by her beauty.

On inquiring at the village in the vicinity, I found that three days after my departure Hussein died suddenly, and that, according to his desire, he was buried in the same tomb with his beloved wife.

His daughter remained alone for some months, after which a young man, in the dress of the Persians, arrived, travel-worn, at the village, and inquired for Hussein, whom he declared to be his uncle. He was shown the way to the tomb, where, finding Azizi, he entered into details respecting his birth and parentage, and proved himself to be her near relative. As their union would be likely to fulfil the wishes of her deceased father, she was next day married to the stranger in the village mosque, and they immediately set out for Persia; forgetting, in the hurry of the moment, to appoint a man who might keep the tomb in order.

"But this very day," said my informant, "a lonely sheikh has arrived from Bagdad, with instructions to watch over the building, to live in the apartment of Azizi, and to keep a lamp for ever burning over the tomb of her beloved parents. This sheikh," continued he, "has beheld the beautiful one, and says the tears always roll over her cheeks when she mentions the tomb in the Delta. She speaks, also," said the Arab, "of a stranger, who once passed a night in the tomb, and has sent him, in token of remembrance, a ruby ring, engraved by the children of the Infidels."

On being introduced to the sheikh, and stating the reasons why I took an interest in the tomb, he presented me with the jewel, exclaiming,

"O stranger! then you have beheld the most beautiful of the children of the Prophet. Accept

this token of her remembrance, and when, in your distant country, you relate the story of Azizi to your children, tell them that the tomb of her parents was cared for in the midst of her happiness, and that her holiest and sweetest thoughts clustered about the spot which had been rendered sacred by their ashes."

PART THE SECOND.

I.

BEHOLD me in Cairo, surrounded by all sorts of temptations; pyramids and dancing-girls, bazaars and mosques, gardens, cemeteries, and the porphyry mountains! And to which did I first yield? If the reader be charitably inclined, he will probably decide in favour of the Pyramids, or the thousand-and-one sights and curiosities of Cairo. I must not, however, avail myself of his charity. Truth is truth, and should above all things regulate the utterance of a traveller. Be it confessed then that my chivalry for womanhood, my veneration for Isis, and also a strong desire to be amused, led me to select for my first visit the village of Shaharah, the Eleusis of modern Egypt, where the mysteries of the Ghawazi are daily and hourly celebrated.

Many are the accounts which have been given of the Hawalim and Ghawàzi, the singing and dancing-girls of Egypt, who have been painted in

the most opposite colours; placed by some on a level with the polished *hetairæ* of Athens, and degraded by others below that wretched sisterhood who haunt the streets of European capitals. In whatever light we view them, it is impossible to comprehend the nature of Egyptian society without ascertaining their real position. At once degraded and courted, condemned to a life resembling that of outcasts, yet admitted occasionally into the most respectable company, flouted and despised even by the very libertines who frequent their dwellings, yet introduced into the harims of the great, and employed to instruct their female children in singing and dancing; we may be truly said to possess in Europe no class resembling them.

There seems to be good reason for suspecting that, with the unavoidable modifications produced by time and circumstances, they are identical with the class of women represented dancing with instruments of music in their hands in the sepulchral chambers of Eilithyias. These, perhaps, were priestesses of Athor or Isis, who, devoted to the worship of the reproductive principle, took vows the reverse of those pronounced by modern nuns, to be in many, if not in most cases, broken. The Ghawazi never made, nor do they still make professions of chastity, but lead a wild, irregular life, in which, apparently, they discover some compensation for the scorn and obloquy to which they are exposed; not that they are despised by all. I saw

a Muslim, poor but apparently respectable, take his little daughter, then about eight years old, to be educated by the Ghawazi at Shaharah as a member of their society; and this, I was told, is not uncommon, though, upon the whole, the sisterhood would appear to belong to a particular caste or tribe, having no affinity to the nations of El Islam, but Pagan in its origin and Pagan still, though affecting to adopt the faith, while abjuring the manners of the Koran.

However this may be, the day after my arrival in Cairo, I joined a party of gentlemen who were going to witness what may be called the Egyptian opera, at the only place in the whole land of Isis where it is performed in perfection. My classical recollections caused me to picture to my imagination the groves of Daphne, the bowers of Paphos, and the blooming suburbs of Athens and Corinth; but the village of the Ghawazi is surrounded by no such luxurious shades. It stands in the midst of the scorching sands, grey, dingy, half calcined by the sun; though beneath those homely roofs were concealed some of the most magnificent female forms in Egypt.

When we approached the village, numbers of the girls came forth to meet us, clad in airy and bewitching costumes, their black hair intertwisted and glittering with ornaments of gold, the palms of their hands and tips of their fingers tinged with henna, so that each nymph reminded us of the

Homeric *rododactulos eos*, their eyes, black and lustrous with kohl, and their whole forms breathing health and pleasure. We alighted at the door of a coffee-house, in which was a spacious saloon filled with Ghawazi and Hawalim, who were tripping to and fro, with tinkling anklets, singing snatches of gay songs, not in mock merriment, but with a joyousness that was evidently genuine.

Nothing could exceed the negligence, not to say the audacity, of their dress. There was art in what they concealed, as well as in what they exhibited; but upon the whole it was easy to perceive that their figures were rich and beautiful, though in general somewhat too much inclined to be plump. It is said that in the north small hands and feet are the exception—not the rule. In Egypt it is exactly the reverse. Nearly all the women have pretty feet and hands, and the largeness and fulness of the limbs make them appear even smaller than they are. In features the Ghawazi, of course, differed much from each other, but they were all fairer than any other class of women in the country, and some had features singularly symmetrical and delicate. The mouth, above all things, was beautiful, and the lips being full and ruby-coloured, imparted to the whole countenance an air of extreme health, greatly strengthened by the sparkling brightness of the eyes.

With regard to their conversation, it was impossible to detect in it any difference from that of

other women, except that they talked a great deal more, apparently because they had more to say. This fact may be rendered intelligible by the circumstances of their lives, which familiarize them with high and low, learned and ignorant; besides, it is their business to make themselves agreeable, and this compels them to think a great deal more than their female neighbours, on the best means of uniting the *utile* with the *dulce*. The tokens of their profession were discoverable in their looks and gait, in their tolerance and equanimity. They sang songs, sentimental and impassioned, but not licentious, and seemed to have among them certain rules of decorum which it would have been considered illbred to violate.

When they danced their *ne plus ultra* dances, it was not in public. They retired in pairs to separate rooms, with a musician and their audience, small or great, and there went through their various evolutions. The music to which they danced had only one merit; that of being adapted to the occasion. Far from being brilliant or scientific, it threw itself forth in gushes and wails, abrupt, broken, fierce, and languishing by turns. I recollect no complete air; but the ends, as it were, of tunes, snatches of imperfect melody—haunt me from time to time, as the scraps of village songs used to haunt the memory of Rousseau. I have said the music was not scientific, but it was something better; for it indicated by a procession of sounds what the move-

ments of the dance would have been unable to express without it.

When the soul is touched, it is immaterial through what instrumentality it is worked upon. For example, it mattered not at all that the musician who played to the Ghawazi was a meagre old Arab, with sombre turban and habiliments, and eyes half closed by drowsy sentiment; that he beat upon a rude drum, or elicited sounds from a flute which, for aught I know, might have been taken from the coffins of the Pharaohs.

The arrangement of the notes was inexpressibly delightful, and affected the soul in a manner inexplicable by any art of mine. Passion, noisy, as it were, in its upper development, becomes quiet—hushed—almost silent, as you touch its depths, and occasionally sends forth a wail which might be confounded with that of pain, but for a tone of sweetness that pervades it.

Is it the same fountain within us that pours forth the tears of sorrow and delight, or are there springs at the two poles, as it were, of feeling, which are broken open, and discharge their sealed waters, when, through the operation of causes internal or external, we are intensely happy or unhappy?

It was not probably the movements of Leila or Fatima that constituted the fascination of the dances I witnessed, but the associations accidentally awakened by them, which sent back my thoughts over four thousand years of Egyptian history, and

called up in some sort a buried world before me. Present at Shaharah in person, I was intellectually and morally far away amid the dim lights of tradition, with the disciples and children of Athor and Isis around me, amid the palm-groves of the Heptanomis, or in the island of mystic beauty which floats midway between the torrid and temperate zones, and woos from the sun the perpendicular glances of the tropics.

II.

It was remarked long ago that an Englishman does not travel to see Englishmen. Still I must acknowledge it is often extremely pleasant to meet among the sun-burnt visages of Africa, one of the old, jolly, familiar faces of the North. It is very like being in two places at the same time, and you experience a sort of perplexity of associations far from disagreeable.

At the house where I lodged, the Hotel del Giardino—strange compound, so called because it stood in a piece of ground on which the Caireens bestowed the name of garden—at this house, I say, there were assembled people of the most opposite physiognomies and appearance; handsome and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, young and old, some with yellow faces from India, others with red and white, like milkmaids, fresh from the Cam or Isis.

I might, if I had leisure, draw a picture of each of the guests, originals many of them, and worthy

to figure in a lively book of travels; but mine is a serious affair, adapted less for amusement than instruction. What I aim at, above all things, is the inculcation of a new system of philosophy, which, whether its presence be felt or not, unquestionably pervades all my descriptions, tales, conversations, and anecdotes. I am not at all ambitious of light writing. What I affect is the solid, something which will make people wiser, if they can get at the meaning of it, especially where I dive into the mysteries of ancient Egypt, explain the interior mechanism of Isis, separate truth from fable, and assign to each world its appropriate system of ideas.

This must be my apology for omitting to paint at length all my companions of the Hotel del Giardino. As many of them as have not yet gone to Amenti, will understand it is out of no disrespect to them or any of them that I make a selection and submit to the laws of extreme brevity; otherwise, what the Zealander said of his brother's book would be true of mine—it would be as thick as a Dutch cheese.

It has doubtless been discovered already, that I have a strong partiality for the Italians, and wherever I meet with them, whether under circumstances favourable or unfavourable, I hold as much intercourse with them as possible. Not that I quite understand their intellectual idiosyncracy. It puzzles me to behold in them the union of pla-

cidity and violence, of gentle contentment reposing on itself, and a fierce hungering after the sympathy of others; self-love, in short, with self-satisfaction, and the love of individual beauty, developed in some other person, and brought accidentally within the sphere of their observation.

There were several members of this nation at the Hotel del Giardino, of whom I may have occasion to speak hereafter; but the man who struck me most was an artist, travelling in search of inspiration among the ruins of the Nilotic Valley. He had been up and down the river again and again, visited Idumæa, and even gone so far as Tadmor in the Wilderness.

And what sort of person does the reader now figure this wandering Etrurian to himself?—a handsome, swarthy gentleman, with moustachios drooping to his chin, and a beard like the tail of a comet? The genuine man was the antipodes of all this. He was old and fat, with a stoop in the shoulders, and thin, grey hairs; his eyes, wherever he got them, were bright blue, so that fate seemed to have cast his birth-place on the wrong side of the Alps. His physiognomy was not handsome, and had never been so in his best days; but there was something in the expression which more than made up for the want of regular features. What the French so happily denominate *bonhommie* had taken up its residence in his heart, and made it pleasant to look upon him. His face resembled

the huge crystallization of a smile; not that unmeaning simper which habit, not nature, has stereotyped on so many faces, but a glowing irradiation of joy and good-will, welling forth incessantly from the seat of feeling.

People might have objected to my friend, that he was not deeply versed in the wisdom of this world; but learning had not visited his cradle, or philosophy smiled upon his youth. He had been a man of one study, if not of one idea, and devoted his whole life to the comprehension and development of beauty. For this he looked everywhere in his travels, for this he visited Asia and Egypt, for this he sat whole days and nights upon the sand, watching the majestic and mystic countenance of the sphinx, illuminated by the sun or moon, and darting forth, as it were, into encircling space, the concentrated beauty of ancient art; for this he visited Shaharah, and contemplated the forms of the Hawalim and Ghawazi in the graceful attitudes and rythmical motions of the dance.

Of course he had picked up a great deal of knowledge in this way, but his simplicity, which was as the simplicity of a child, prevented him from giving system and development to his thoughts. It was fortunate that Vere, as well as myself, took a liking to this fat Italian, who rejoiced in the congenial name of Paolo Allegro. He was, however, a Papist, but this was no subject of regret, as it supplied us with a point of difference, and enabled

us to discuss and dispute, without which, since we agreed on almost everything else, our conversation might have become insipid.

He had a companion unlike himself in all things, save in kindness of disposition. This was Giovanni della Spada, a young physician, whose black beard, mingling on both sides with his moustachios, concealed a portion of his handsome features, and imparted to him a fierceness of air not quite in harmony with his general bearing.

There was likewise attracted into our circle a jolly Englishman, with small twinkling eyes, half-buried in fat, and "good round belly with fat capon lined," who had perpetually in his mouth these words of Hamlet: "Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw and dissolve itself into a dew;" and it would have been pleasant for him had his prayer, in part at least, been answered, for he had a great deal more flesh than he knew what to do with, and often used to perspire, poor fellow, while toiling through the desert, almost as if he were about to become a male Niobe, and get transformed into a fountain.

III.

With these companions, and two or three others, who, on the present occasion, shall be nameless, we agreed to visit the Pyramids. The reader, who has waded through a thousand and one descriptions of them, wishes, I dare say, they had fallen upon

us and spared him another infliction; but let him or her take courage; I am a man of much charity, and can sympathise heartily with those who have been constrained, God help them, to travel over the common-places of history and literature.

Prudence is not my forte—nor was it that of my friends; but in this case we took counsel of it, and went to bed early, it having been determined that we should set out, on our visit to the mystic structures, some hours before day; but I must here indulge myself in a digression, and relate how I secured the services of my friend Suliman—for he really was more a friend than a servant—as, but for his activity and forethought, neither I nor any one connected with me would have enjoyed the projected excursion at all.

There was, at that time, in Cairo, a countryman of ours of erudite celebrity, who professed to understand everything, from the construction of a catacomb to the character of an Arab interpreter. To him, therefore, with due humility, I applied to know the points and qualifications of Suliman, who had been strongly recommended to me by a learned hieroglyphical Doctor.

It often happens in this world, that a man aims at obtaining a reputation for wisdom, by calling in question the principles of all around him. This was the case with my erudite referee. He would not, on any account, have had it supposed that the devil himself could have taken him in, or succeeded

in appropriating the smallest portion of his property without his knowing it. Accordingly, he had made up his mind to think and speak of every Arab as a thief, so that, of course, when I came to inquire Suliman's character, he could not be expected to depart from this theory. His answer, therefore, was, that he did not consider him more dishonest than any other Arab; which I regarded as perfectly satisfactory.

And here, at the very threshold of our acquaintance, let me do justice to poor Suliman, who, I hope, may be alive to hear—for he cannot read—this testimony in his favour. He was as honest a fellow as ever broke bread, and if I thoroughly enjoyed my voyage up the Nile, I owed it as much to the friendly attentions of this son of Ishmael, as to any other circumstance whatever.

In his externals, however, Suliman was not the most prepossessing person in the world. He had high cheek-bones, sharp nose and chin, small eyes, and a complexion in which there appeared to be a strong dash of the negro. His legs were striped and straked like Jacob's cattle, the black and white descending in parallel lines or breaking away into clouds, which melted insensibly into each other. But this did not, in the slightest degree, interfere with his probity or affection. I had a long experience of him, and had fortune put it in my power to be generous, would, when we parted, have made him independent for the rest of

his days, and felt convinced I did him no more than justice.

But I am running away at a great rate from the Pyramids, and must endeavour to get back to them, or, at least, to the steps preliminary to our visit.

We got up and dressed about half-past two in the morning, after which we sat down to such a breakfast as was necessary to prepare us for the fatigues of the day. It makes me hungry now to think of it. What coffee in brimming cups, with the rich cream of the buffalo frothing on its surface—what white cakes—what fruits and sweatmeats! Some of my friends, paying no deference to the Muslims around us, would indulge, also, in ham and grilled bacon, which, as it crackled under their voracious teeth, must have jarred strangely on the nerves of the Mohammedans, who hate us principally because we will persist in feeding on the unclean beast. Then we had eggs and cold roast fowls, with other solidities and delicacies which I now forget. Last came the crowning luxury of all, the pipe of Gebeli, with its cool amber mouth-piece, and long stem sheathed in crimson silk, which allowed us to recline at our ease on the divan, and blow up delicious clouds towards the ceiling.

Here we had the heart of the Arabs along with us, and I, with my democratic propensities, in general most uncongenial to travellers, would make the enjoyment of the Ishmaelites complete by desiring Suleiman to hand round my tobacco-skin

and let every one of them fill his pipe out of it. They, poor fellows, thought this an act of munificence, while, in reality, it was only a sort of stratagem practised in self-defence, for I could not have enjoyed my pipe when half a score of fellows with hungry eyes were looking enviously upon me.

There were several hours of the night behind when we had completed all these operations, and issued forth to mount our asses. There was a great deal of bustle and swearing, of course, in the inn yard, before we could get fairly under weigh. The practice of indulging in these valedictory objurgations may, for aught I know, be immoral, but it is not at all the less prevalent or pleasant on that account. Otherwise cabmen, assinaries, muleteers, and camel-drivers would not, all the world over, be so much addicted to it. Apparently it clears their lungs, for I have noticed that, when they have done swearing, they generally begin to sing, and seem unusually happy.

On the present occasion it was otherwise, for we had no sooner got on our beasts, and turned out into the dark streets, than we became as silent as thieves. Probably the physiognomy of a mighty capital, plunged in profound sleep, where sorrow, or passion, or crime did not keep the eyelids unsealed, rendered us thoughtful and meditative. Ah, how many hearts lay beating on both sides of us as we passed, and what an universe of dreams unfolded itself there to render them happy or

miserable! Here, perhaps, souls were descending through the lava fire of pleasure, to take up their transitory abode in tabernacles of clay, and there, having run through their earthly career, were bidding farewell to the beloved tenement, and preparing to wing their flight they knew not whither.

An Oriental night is never quite dark, unless during the prevalence of storms. The narrow patches of sky above us, seen between the lofty houses, were sprinkled thickly with stars. The air was motionless, cool, but not cold. Our asses paced leisurely along in a string which stretched half the length of a street, till we reached one of the immense gates by which each quarter of the city is separated from the others.

Here there was a short halt, and the beasts collected in front of the gate, while the drowsy janitor rolled out from a niche in the wall and groped about for his keys, sometimes in the dark, and elsewhere by the light of a small lantern usually placed over his head on a projecting stone while he slept.

What a sight would Cairo have presented could we have unroofed all the dwellings and passed invisibly from one end of it to the other! Should we have discovered more to sadden than to delight us? My temper of mind inclines me to answer in the negative. Wickedness spreads widely, but not so widely as good, and therefore, He who searches all hearts, to whom all places are open,

probably discovers even among the worst of His creatures a greater amount of affection, kindness, and benevolence than of their opposites.

Before we issued forth from beyond the walls, we heard, far above us, in the darkness, the voices of numerous Muezzins, some near, some distant, calling up the children of the faithful to prayer. Nothing can exceed the sublimity of this invitation. It descends through the atmosphere like a voice from heaven, and though in the heyday of worldly pursuits it may often be unheeded, there must be times when it will necessarily strike with power on every heart.

There is nothing in the whole circle of El-Islam, doctrines, traditions, or precepts comparable in beauty or grandeur to this. My pen is never weary of repeating it.—"Arise, ye Faithful, and pray; prayer is better than sleep." And so it is, and so it will always be admitted to be by those who set a higher value on their intellectual than on their animal life. Prayer is the golden link which holds together heaven and earth, and neither the individual nor this nation can ever become wholly corrupt while the practice prevails. Man then speaks to God, and God, in many cases, to man. Let the opinions, therefore, of the Mohammedan be what they may, his prayers must be holy, and bring down a blessing on the land, even where error prevails.

IV.

It is one of the pleasures of literature that it is a sort of joint operation undertaken by the writer and the reader, and impossible to be completed by either of them. The delight produced by it must be the offspring of both, and therefore they regard each other very much in the relation of parents. I must claim this co-operation, while I endeavour to bring up out of the depths of the past a true picture of the morning which conducted me to the foot of the Pyramids.

Everybody, doubtless, has heard of the vast mounds composed of dust and rubbish which once protected Cairo on the south from the Wind of Fifty Days. The government had, at this time, undertaken to remove them; and though the grey dawn had not yet begun to lift her modest head above the desert, the Arabs were there with wheelbarrow and pickaxe, swarming and humming like bees about the eminences they were to clear away.

If the toil fell irksome and heavy upon them, it never could succeed in breaking their spirits. In the midst of their labours, hungry, perhaps, and thirsty, with no pleasant recollections of the past, no cheering hopes for the future, at least in this world, they exclaimed, "God is great! It is written;" and worked on with unabated earnestness. May calamity ever fall lightly upon them!

If the traveller be not a perfect man, in which

case he need not travel, he must be bettered by witnessing the patience, the cheerfulness, the contentment of these children of the desert, transplanted, against their will, to the Egyptian valley, and there made the playthings of Turkish pashas. The meanest and poorest of them has an inheritance which the richest prince might envy—an unclouded belief in God and in the extension of his goodness to all his creatures. What they enjoy not now, they shall enjoy hereafter. The gates of Paradise gleam and glitter perpetually before them; and they have only to shuffle off this mortal coil, to step into realms of unfading joy, where the Father of all living shall wipe away the tears from every eye.

I am sadly afraid I may be taken for a Sabean idolater, a worshipper of the stars, so frequently does the mention of this host of heaven occur in my narrative. There is, however, a pleasure to which my churlish language will not enable me to give utterance, in gazing up, a little before day, at that boundless vault, fretted with golden fires, which one has so much leisure to observe in travelling through Africa.

Then, if ever, a man must feel his heart overrunning with gratitude. Philosophy may deny it; if she pleases; but the universe was made for man, because man alone can enjoy or appreciate it. When beauty is on all sides of him,—when mountains, and plains, and streams, and forests stretch around him, or lift up their heads in the holy stillness

of night,—when glory is showered from heaven like rain,—when the pleasant voice of friendship murmurs beside him, as, elated with health and intoxicated with animal spirits, he rides along the borders of the desert,—can he doubt his having been created to be the lord of the physical world?

Sterne observes, in his eloquent way, that with an ass he could commune for ever. We have, most of us, the same predilection; which is fortunate, as a great deal of our intercourse in this world is with that harmless beast; but in Egypt you are hardly ever out of his society. He takes you on all your pleasant visits, accompanies you to Leila or Zuleika, is your carriage and your steam-engine, your preservative from weariness, your gentle, easy, uncomplaining slave. I think I see at this moment his long ears, twinkling in the dawning light, as through avenues of mimosa and sycamore-trees he trotted, on the morning in question, towards the broad Nile.

Vere had got into conversation with Della Spada, while Allegro rode beside me, pointing out every now and then the opening beauties of the prospect. On the right, representing eternally the source of life to the transient inhabitants of the valley, stood the mighty Pyramids, with the holy air of eternity about them, wooing the glances of the stars. On the left rose the Porphyry Mountains, gradually putting on, as the day increased, a ruddier tinge, till at length their summits were literally encircled by a luminous halo. Before us lay the sleepy, half

mythical city of Old Cairo, according to tradition directly opposite the spot where the infant prophet was found in the ark of bulrushes, and where, at a later period, the ashes of Joseph were let down in a golden coffin into the Nile.

On reaching the edge of the stream, we found we were not the only people stirring at that early hour: scores of Arabs, male and female, some mounted on donkeys, others on foot, issued from the dingy streets, for the purpose of crossing over to the plains of Memphis, where it was their lot to pass the day in the labours of agriculture. Herodotus, right in most things, is wrong in supposing that no breeze breathes at night over the bosom of the Nile. My sensations have often convinced me of the contrary; and at dawn, too, when the current of the atmosphere descends with the current of the stream, it is often extremely chilly.

Little wreaths of mist went floating down the water, and the stork and the pelican, rising from the marshy shore on the opposite side, flew screaming through the morning air. The large ferry-boats, little better than rafts, were soon ready, and in poured the crowd,—men, women, boys, asses,—till we exhibited a miniature resemblance to Noah's ark.

Allegro, who spoke Arabic well, laughed and chatted with our rough companions, who seemed much flattered by his politeness. My own Arabic was very imperfect, but I stumbled through it, and generally contrived to make myself understood.

A young woman who sat near me, on the gunwale of the boat, mistook me for a priest, on account, I suppose, of my long black beard, and asked me to pronounce a blessing on her. She was married, she said, had a good husband, and a comfortable home —yet one thing was wanting to complete their felicity: she had no children; and the belief exists universally among the Arabs that the intercession of certain classes of persons can procure what they ask of Heaven. Hence the commonness amongst them of the name of Ibn Salah, or the child of prayer.

I answered that she should have my blessing and my intercession, for I was sure she deserved them. She replied, that she hoped so, for that she did all she could to make her husband happy, and she said he was happy, and that if I came to their dwelling, which she carefully pointed out to me on the bank of the river from which our boat was receding, I should enjoy the Arab's welcome.

Her husband had performed the pilgrimage, and was not, therefore, an ordinary man. He had seen the birth-place and the tomb of the Prophet, and knew stories and anecdotes, and could converse with strangers like an Effendi. "I am proud of him, therefore," said she, "as I ought to be, and am now going to fetch him from the house of his father, at Ghizeh, where he has been spending two or three days."

The young woman who thus spoke to me was

slight and pretty. She was not of the poorest class, for she had three garments: an inner and an outer chemise, the one white and the other blue, and a pair of full chintz trowsers, reaching to the ankle. In her hair she wore a few metallic ornaments, which looked like gold.

V.

The sun was now rising, and converting what was before a sort of pale mackarel sky, into a canopy of crimson and gold. Up and down, right and left, a wilderness of picturesque objects presented themselves; a number of white sails moving in different directions over the broad stream—sycamore-trees and the tower of the Nilometer on the island of Rhoda—the white buildings of Masr-el-Atikeh—fringes of mimosas on the banks of the river—the village of Ghizeh, flanked by palm-groves — here and there a saint's tomb, or the minaret of a mosque, led the eye across the plain to the sphinx and the pyramids, relieved like mountain-pinnacles of rose granite against the blue sky.

I dare say that very much of my enjoyment, even at that moment, depended on myself. But I can scarcely imagine a man, gifted with the ordinary share of imagination, who had ever looked into an ancient book or read the Scriptures, or the Koran, or the histories of El-Islam, who would not have felt a certain amount of happiness on stepping

forth from the ferry-boat at Ghizeh, and mounting his ass, to traverse the magnificent plain before him.

The unpleasant fever, my companion across the Delta, had now left me, and been followed by robust health, to possess which, a man would give kingdoms, if he had them. I scarcely knew what to do with my animal spirits. Pope, basing his description on the Greek, hits off this sort of feeling with great felicity. Speaking of one of the heroes, he says:—

"He seem'd to swim,
And felt a pinion lifting every limb."

Nor was this all. The vital fluid, too exuberant to be contained within the body, exhaled in smiles, so that during nearly the whole of that journey, I resembled one of fortune's spoiled children, who have more felicity than they can hold.

Let not the reader, however, draw false conclusions. I don't mean that I had much wealth; but to make up for the scantiness of it, I seemed to have the health of a whole parish concentrated in my little body; and I would advise all invalids, all people of weak nerves and weak stomachs, to go up the Nile, ride about on donkeys, and spend as much of their time as they can in the desert.

When we had reached the top of the river's bank, Vere came up to me and said:—

"St. John, we are going to enter the Amenti of your friend Isis—these are the precincts of it, by heavens! Just look: did the eye ever rest on any-

thing so beautiful? What verdure! What silvery expanses of water! What mighty palm-forests! What flights of exquisite birds, white as the driven snow, or plumed with crimson, lapis lazuli and gold! Let us pitch our tabernacle here, my boy, and bid farewell to the fogs and follies of the North!"

From the sublime to the ridiculous the distance, as the reader knows, is not great. Before Vere had come quite to the end of his exclamations, the obstinate jackass on which our fat English friend was mounted took it into his head to run along the side of a steep bank, where he capsized and rolled with his heavy burden towards the water. Our friend, who, like Falstaff, had a sort of alacrity in sinking, no sooner touched the pond than down he went like a plummet, but had luckily, by this time, got disengaged from his beast.

Suliman was the first to come to the rescue, and before any of the rest of us could alight, had fished him up, muddy and dripping, but full of vivacity as ever. He said it was only a cold bath taken by compulsion, and that he should, no doubt, be all the better for it. It is, perhaps, wise, on such occasions, to affect stoicism, but a man's physiognomy is often less jesuitical than his lips, and lets out more of his annoyance than he desires.

Allegro's turn came next; not that he also got a sousing, but that the frisky little animal on which he had deposited his rotundity thought it would be pleasant to travel the plain without him, and

therefore, while descending a small hollow, contrived to stumble apropos, and like a catapult sent Allegro over his head, after which he set off at full speed, and was captured with difficulty.

VI.

Above all things I hate sulky people, particularly on a journey; yet there are times when one prefers one's own company to anybody else's; I suppose because one has a castle to build, a thing best accomplished in solitude and silence. To enjoy this luxury I detached myself from the party by riding rapidly ahead, over narrow slippery causeways, where one false step would have sent me headlong into some pond or lake. I heard several shouts in the rear, intended to arrest my progress, but I was as deaf as a post to all such invitations, and pushed on till sufficiently in advance to feel myself alone.

Egypt has seldom had justice done to it, with regard to its beauty. Nothing can look more like fairy-land than the great plain of Memphis, stretching from the Nile to the desert, and covered, immediately after the inundation, with lakes, and ponds, and sheets of water, interspersed with corn-fields, villages, hamlets, thickets, copses, groves, and palm-woods, through which you discern, here and there, small white cupolas or towering minarets flashing in the sun.

But from all these the eye is soon attracted by

the vast masses of the Pyramids, over which, as you draw near, you behold the shadows of the clouds travelling as over the face of a mountain. It is not as mere structures of stone and mortar that they present themselves to your imagination. If you have a heart at all, it must throb when you reflect on what they represent, on the ages that have passed over them, scarcely leaving on their exterior any traces of their passage, or the system of ideas which prevailed when they were erected, filling millions of souls with devotion and gladness, but now vanished like one of those thin vapours you behold at dawn on the bosom of the Nile, which the sun's first ray melts into the invisible air.

Disappointment is our usual lot here below. Pleasures, the sweetest and purest of all, scarcely answer, when tasted, the mighty expectation we had formed beforehand. But when a thing fills the soul—even for a moment—and renders it forgetful of all else, the most insatiable appetite for excitement can ask no more; and the Pyramids did this for me. I approached them with feelings not, perhaps, to be described, but full to overflowing with sublime delight. Genius of the first order had been at work there, aiming, no doubt, at eternal fame, but missing its aim through a series of strange circumstances, which no human wisdom could be expected to foresee. Perhaps, however, that mighty architect, had he been consulted, would have preferred that it should be as it is, and

that instead of immortalizing one name, his glorious achievement should be attributed to the genius of Egypt.

A nation's concentrated intellect is now regarded as the author of the Pyramids, which have beheld a stream of population mightier than that of the Nile flow past their feet, and vanish, leaving few visible traces on the history of the world. Engulfed in the silence of Amenti, those departed generations now enjoy imperturbable repose, while their works, the most stupendous ever reared by human hands, stand out from the crust of the globe, and are almost confounded with the works of nature.

VII.

Having reached the sands at the foot of the sphinx, I paused to allow my companions time to overtake me. What the Egyptians signified by this symbolical figure, seems not to be exactly decided. I think it was the type of womanhood, in which power is engrafted on beauty and gentleness. This they represented by a woman's face, neck, and bosom, terminating in the body of a lioness, not in fierce or violent action, but in eternal repose. This is the nature of the passive principle, which receives within itself the germs of life, and quickens and brings them to perfection, without any external manifestation of energy. Possibly, also, the Egyptians meant to insinuate that though

the female sex is placed as our companion upon earth, it is never understood by us, but will remain, like the sphinx, an enigma to the day of doom.

However this may be, I take it for granted that the approximation of sphinx and pyramids was not altogether accidental. The stranger and the traveller who approach might learn from the mystic figure beneath the rocks, that around him all was symbol and allegory, and that if he could not read the riddle of its existence, he could scarcely expect to interpret the most abstruse of all symbols on the sacred mount.

In all ages there has been an esoteric philosophy, a doctrine and language confined to the few, and even now, they who as travellers journey over the surface of the earth, must veil a portion of their discoveries behind an obscure terminology.

When perfect, the sphinx, in all likelihood, formed the crown of Egyptian art. There is something inexpressibly majestic in the dusky head, suggesting the idea of a buried goddess, emerging from beneath the sands; and if we contemplate the outline of the features, and restore what centuries have mutilated and marred, we shall probably have a perfect type of the beautiful as it existed in the mind of the Egyptians.

When my companions reached me, we repaired to a chamber in the rocks, where we made a hearty and a cheerful meal to prepare us for the ascent of the Pyramids.

The successor of Falstaff was by this time perfectly dry, and joked amongst the foremost at his misfortune of the morning. We then sallied forth, and scrambling up the precipices, found assembled a number of Arabs from a neighbouring village, who desired to have the honour of being our guides. A regular contest now took place, the Muslims endeavouring to obtain as much as they could, and the strangers to give as little. I have always disliked this sort of exhibition, and thought it would be better to sacrifice a few piastres in order to give satisfaction to those Ishmaelites. No doubt they might grow more and more exorbitant were travellers to become more facile. But there is little danger of this, for, if the Orientals are grasping, the Franks are often niggardly; not always, perhaps, through meanness, but because they will not have it said that they suffer themselves to be overreached.

Two young men, sons of the village sheikh, attached themselves to me, and without ceremony or bargaining constituted themselves my guides. I might, they said, give them what I pleased, little or much, it would be immaterial. They would even go with me, if I wished it, for nothing. Though I knew this to be the mere language of compliment, it was pleasant; and away we started to ascend the temples of Athor, and look down from the summit on the splendid landscape extending on all sides.

VIII.

The fat Englishman, whose courage had held out thus far, having for some minutes eyed the Pyramids with wonder and terror, refused to attempt the ascent. He possibly remembered Falstaff and the buck-basket, and that, as his jovial prototype ran the risk of being drowned like a blind puppy in the Thames, so, if he ventured to climb four or five hundred feet into the air, the slightest accident might send him rolling like a hedgehog down the steep, and consign him to a berth among the mummies. He resolved, therefore, to remain safe where he was. No one else among the company followed his example, but while he sat quietly on a stone, smoking his shibouk, the rest of us mounted the lower ledge, and passing out to the north-eastern corner, began to scramble up as best we might.

We talk of these structures as being built for eternity, and they may possibly last as long as the globe; still, it is quite obvious they are wearing out. Time has already shattered them in several places; the mortar is crumbling away, and storms or the efforts of vandalism have loosened and tumbled down many stupendous blocks from the angles. In the spaces thus created the traveller now pauses during his ascent, to turn round as Plato did on the Cretan Olympos, to admire the

landscape unfolding more and more at each successive station beneath the eye.

It would be a pleasant thing to ascertain the thoughts of every man, who, with ideas really his own, has climbed up the face of these mighty temples. Many, if we may judge by the language in which they have sought to express their feelings, would appear to have been subdued, humiliated by the mountains of masonry beneath them. But these are not the sentiments they are really calculated to inspire; but rather something like pride, that a creature so insignificant in dimensions as man, could thus become the antagonist of nature, and imitate the sublimest of her productions, those mountain elevations, which, acting as the basis of speculation, literally tempt us to spurn the earth and wing our way intellectually into the interminable fields of space. I inwardly thanked the Egyptian architect, who, ere the nation to which I belonged emerged from the womb, had erected these structures for the admiration of posterity. He could not, of course, know what would happen in the days that should come after him, but judging of the future by the past, he no doubt anticipated that a time would arrive, when his sublime workmanship should be an enigma, solved by various sophists and pedants, each in the way most congenial to his understanding.

I am by no means insensible to the sufferings of those generations whose energies were exhausted

in heaping up these masses. What streams of tears watered the barren sands at the foot of them! What a chorus of groans and curses rang through the air as they arose! What innumerable skeletons of the victims of tyranny were buried noiselessly and obscurely in the neighbourhood! During one hundred and twenty years were the people of Lower Egypt oppressed with taxes and subjected to forced labour that these emblems of the source of life might stand as records of their strange creed throughout all succeeding ages. But the temporary suffering has passed away, and the result of it remains, vast and imperishable. Pain has become the parent of pleasure, as death often is of life.

When we reached the summit, I felt myself really to be in the land of Isis. The dream of years long past came over me. The Goddess, however, was only present as she had been from the first, in spirit, walking beside me unseen, imparting force and vitality to my ideas, and enabling me to bridge over, as it were, the abysses of time, and connect the long past with the future. I called to mind, as I stood there, a sonnet I had formerly written in anticipation of the pleasure I now enjoyed. It arose out of a very familiar occasion, and was addressed to a lady, who during the performance of what is called magic music, gave me a stock-gilliflower.

" Lady, the flower presented by thy hand,
Albeit nor rose nor lily, still shall be
Companion of my wand'rings, and of thee
Teach me to think on some far distant strand.
Perchance, as faint and pensively I stand
Beside the burning Pyramid, this flower
Shall call to mind the Norman's merry land,
And all the pleasures of that festive hour,
When thy fair friend, with music's magic sound,
Taught thy uncertain hand what gift to seek,
To lavish on the stranger—while around
The wonder was, the roses on thy cheek
Did not suggest the flower that should be found
Wherever lovely lips the silence break."

IX.

What the mummy is to the living body, that modern Egypt is, morally and politically speaking, to ancient Egypt. You miss in it all the life of the soul; the people, without education, without philosophy, without the higher forms of industry, are only a collection of shadows, which, when they pass away, leave no trace upon the earth. But physical Egypt is still prolific and beautiful, clothed with superb vegetation, watered by one of the noblest rivers in the world, and over-canopied by a sky beaming with warmth and vitality. Looking down from the summit of the Great Pyramid, I commanded a prospect interesting and varied beyond description. Towards the Delta, bearing the same mystic form with the structure on which I stood, I beheld a series of groves and woods of

emerald foliage, reflected from the bosom of lakes, and fading reluctantly on the obscure verge of the horizon.

Westward, the Libyan desert, the home of free races and free thought, stretched away interminably; sinking, swelling, undulating and reflecting everywhere the mid-day burning rays of the sun, which sheathed its surface with an investiture of quivering splendour.

To the south, as far as the eye could command, by Abousir, Dashour, and Sakkarah, a procession of Pyramids appeared to be marching towards Ethiopia, each, with sublime monotony, repeating the figure of the other, like the races and generations that have come down, multiplying and increasing from Adam.

In the direction of the glowing orient, the placid and majestic Nile rolled its waters towards the Mediterranean, laving the feet of villages, and towns, and cities, mirroring the mosques, castles, and minarets of Cairo, and gleaming warmly in the distance like a golden sea.

Before me, the mystic basis of Egyptian theology lay now completely unveiled, the theogamia, the marriage of the gods. Isis lay there happy in the arms of Osiris, who, coming down rushing upon her from heaven, gave birth to all the wonders of the valley, men, animals, with the moisture and vegetation by which they are sustained. But there, too, was Typhon, enveloping the married pair in

his huge and destructive embrace, threatening perpetually to swallow them up with their offspring.

No one can behold these three mighty agents, the earth, the river, and the desert, without detecting in them the constituent elements of Egyptian mythology. All the other gods, whether preceding or following the Isiac trinity, may, in the same way, be rendered palpable to the understanding: Phthah, the original fire pervading chaos, and preceding the birth of the sun and moon; Phre, the enlightening and generative principle diffused through nature, and with the aid of Athor, beauty, desire, developing the germs of all living things. In this system, intelligence, mind, thrown far into the back-ground, scarcely appears. In the vast procession of phenomena, all is seemingly material, though the idea of intellect must necessarily lie at the root of the most unequivocal Pantheism. God, according to the Egytian theology, is a double principle, active and passive, spiritual and material, from the union of which all things arise, not as new existences, but as emanations. Hence the idea that all we see is God, which, projecting itself into all forms, is equally divine in everything; hence the worship of the stars and planets, of the sun and moon, and men and animals.

If all be divine or of divine origin, there can be in nature nothing common or unclean; and hence the worship of Isis and Osiris, of Athor and her

symbols, typified by the Pyramids, and confounded frequently with the eternal fire. Many philosophers, not perceiving the root of the idea, have imagined those vast structures to represent material flame, that, broad at its basis, rushes fiercely towards heaven, diminishing as it mounts, and terminating in a lambent point. The thing signified was a flame truly, but it was the flame of life, invisible in its essence, and therefore symbolized by the material system which connects the visible with the invisible, the universal with the individual, time past with the present and the future, on which are based the happiness and the hopes of man. It was one peculiarity of the Egyptians, that in deifying childhood, which they did under the name of Horus, they likewise deified the agencies by which it is called into being: Isis, Osiris, with all the forms which vitality assumes in its descent from Phthah.

X.

When Burke, in the name of Bolingbroke, wrote his attack on civil society, he was much more in earnest than he seemed desirous to have it believed. In fact, no man of reflection or sensibility can read history without being profoundly humiliated by the spectacle it presents; for what are the sum and substance of the entire annals of our race? what, but one unbroken proof of human weakness on the one hand, and human depravity on the other?

Nor does there appear any likelihood that the future

will greatly differ from the past. Converse with weak men in any rank of life, and you will find that they acquiesce in their inferiority,—that through meanness of intellect, or poverty of spirit, or the incapacity to comprehend the principles of truth, they tamely succumb to what is established, and lie down quietly, while individuals no better than themselves trample proudly over them.

I have met, many times in my life, examples of this class of men,—have heard them, at first with surprise but afterwards entirely without it, express a sort of pride in enumerating the claims of others to be regarded as their superiors,—have listened to the lispings of their impotence, while they endeavoured to derive some consequence and consolation from the act of truckling to poor, weak wretches like themselves; and in this humiliating phenomenon I have discovered the secret of the triumph of the few over the many. *Possunt quia posse videntur.*

What tends to give perpetuity to this delusion is the fact that able men find their interest in supporting it. Skilful, perhaps, in the use of language, having at their command a profusion of imagery, possessing the faculty to create imaginary characters, to weave fictitious narratives, and to depict or embody the universal passions of the mind, they enlist eloquence, and at least the appearance of wisdom, in the service of things as they are.

But the social system hitherto prevalent in the world is little better than a vast imposture, which

has swayed men through their ignorance. Words have power irresistibly to subdue the mind, provided they are skilfully connected with the metaphysical, invisible world, which completely envelops our physical system, and is the source of all power wielded in it. All authority is based on metaphysical principles, or on metaphysical fictions. It is not what they see that overawes men, but what they do not see; some indefinite Nemesis in the back-ground, distinct from God, which, though tracing its origin to fable, exercises irresistible sway over realities.

In this way alone can we account for the fearful sacrifices made by mankind at the instigation of popes, emperors, and kings. What blood have they not shed, what suffering have they not inflicted and endured! From the gate of Eden to the threshold of all potentates on the globe, along the whole of the vast domain of time, an ever-increasing stream of blood has marked the progress of civilization. Half the briny ocean would almost appear to have flowed in tears from human eyes, when we consider the sorrows that have afflicted our species, the crimes they have committed, the agonies they have endured, to gratify the pride of a few individuals sufficiently audacious to claim their obedience.

That there have from time to time been lulls in this tempest of misery, during which the earth has smiled, and society answered, in part at least, the end for which it was created, is true; but they have

been of short duration, and have been invariably followed, as they were preceded, by fresh accumulations of calamity. Take the history of Egypt as an example. At first the government, we are told, was in the hands of the gods, which means, I suppose, that there were no princes or secular governors, but instead of these a theocracy wielded by priests. Then came the institution of monarchy, when the ecclesiastical order, unable entirely to exclude the political and military classes, suffered them to become their associates, still, however, retaining in their hands the means of coercing their coadjutors, through the superstition of the people. Under this double yoke the millions groaned and were oppressed, condemned to ignorance and poverty, to the utmost drudgery of toil, in order that the sacerdotal and regal castes might convert the whole term of life into a holiday, and devote all their hours to epicurean enjoyments.

But the sacrifices of the nation could not end there. The vices and profligacy of their rulers rendering them weak and effeminate, incited the Arabs of the desert to invade the land, and these, under the name of Hyksos, or Shepherd Kings, exercised despotic sway during several generations. Afterwards the Persian monarchs poured their hordes into the Nilotic valley, destroyed the monuments of ancient art, subverted the power of priests and sovereigns, and reduced the whole country to the condition of a province. Then fol-

lowed a brief interval of national independence, which, instead of leading to the reform of old institutions, and the establishment of a good civil and military discipline, only plunged the people still deeper in sloth and superstition, and exposed it to the conquest of the Macedonians. These, in their turn, were subdued by the Romans, the Romans by the Arabs, the Arabs by the Turks and Memluks; these, again, by the French, the French by the English, who restored the country to the Osmanlis that now exercise an ignorant and helpless despotism over the natives of the soil.

Am not I, therefore, justified in saying that Egypt has been traversed in its whole length by a Nile of blood, which, running side by side with that of water, has corrupted and polluted the atmosphere, moral and physical?

XI.

I went one day while in Cairo to a public garden, much frequented by the Kopts. A wandering Pole, whose history I shall presently relate, accompanied me. He was in the habit of spending much of his time there, attracted to the spot by a young Christian girl who came thither with her mother to sit under the shade of palms and banana-trees, and sew, smoke, and chat with her companions, girls about her own age and of the same religion.

As we went early, we had, at first, the whole garden to ourselves, and found it a delicious place

for strolling about and meditating. Though not very extensive, the denseness of the foliage made it appear so, by concealing the neighbouring walls and houses; and therefore, when a cool breeze came and put the heavy leaves of the banana-trees in motion, and produced a sound like the rushing of distant waters, among the foliage of the lofty date-palms above, I almost fancied myself in some small oasis in the desert; birds, perched high among the branches, chirped and twittered completely at their ease, and once or twice a stray gush of music, issuing from we knew not where, nourished the strange sensations excited by the *genius loci*.

My companion was a person of forbidding aspect, every feature seeming to speak of conscious villany; though, as I knew no evil of him, and as he seemed extremely desirous to please, I could not, upon the mere strength of my instincts, make up my mind entirely to avoid his society, especially as he appeared forlorn and wretched, without friends, almost without means, and, therefore, greatly to be pitied, let the career which had brought him to that pass have been almost what it might. He was about the middle height, with pale, cadaverous face, eyes twinkling and uneasy, and a mouth of portentous expression. Still, towards me he was mild and gentle, at times almost fawning, though this was discoverable rather in manner than in words. When he spoke of the Koptic girl, I inferred he was acquainted with her, and that, as her parents were

wealthy, he was aiming at making a good match, accommodating himself to her religion and settling down at his ease in Cairo. On inquiry I found he had never spoken to her, and only came there to smoke when he could afford a pipe, and sit down and watch her face from a distance.

While discussing this subject we walked to and fro through the various avenues, blowing about us tiny white clouds, which went gyrating up like the smoke of fairy chimneys between the stems of the palm-trees, here and there sheathed with golden light, though generally enveloped in deep shade. Presently the Pole touched my elbow, and with a nod directed my attention towards a particular part of the garden, where I beheld the young Koptic girl seated beside her mother, on a little wooden bench backed by trellis-work.

Whoever is acquainted with the race to which she belonged, would of course infer there could have been no beauty in her, for, as a people, the Kopts are certainly among the most ill-favoured in the East. Not that their faces are coarsely formed, or their figures bad, but that they have generally a yellow, unwholesome complexion, suggesting the idea of their having been dipped in train-oil, and left to dry and bake in the sun. Add to this the sordid expression which the love of money nearly always bestows, especially in a degraded race, habitually looked down upon, oppressed and insulted.

However, our youthful Koptic friend, by some good-humoured freak of nature, seemed to have been organized differently from her people. Fair as one of the Ghawazi, with handsome countenance, and large, laughing eyes, she suggested the idea of a Mohammedan woman, freed from the restraints of the harim. Her mother looked not unworthy to have given birth to such a daughter, and there passed between them continually tokens of a mutual affection, infinitely delightful. The grim and gloomy Pole appeared to lose his galley-slave look while regarding this interesting group.

"Do you think," said he, "it would be imprudent to speak to them?"

I advised him to desist, especially as he had talked of setting out for Syria in the course of a few days. He acquiesced for the moment, but I fancied I could discover in his face signs of a slowly-formed resolution which boded no good to the little Koptic beauty. Feigning suddenly to recollect that he had business to transact in the Turkish quarter, he abruptly left me, and I saw him no more for some days.

XII.

There was likewise among my acquaintance another Pole, who offered to this saturnine gentleman the most striking contrast in the world. He was as harmless as a child, and almost as helpless and simple. His vocabulary was made up indis-

criminately of eight or ten languages, which he huddled pell-mell together, without the slightest regard to etymology or syntax. He had even forgotten his mother-tongue, and was a sort of mongrel cosmopolite, with no particular preference for any race or country, except a slight predilection, perhaps, in favour of the English. This man kept a shop in an obscure street, where he earned his living by selling beads and trinkets, wholesale, to certain Arab adventurers, who went like pedlars up the country, visiting the most remote villages, striking off sometimes into the oases, passing the tropic, and penetrating occasionally into Dongola and Sennaar. From some of these hardy wayfarers I learned several curious particulars respecting the Muslims who inhabit the country of the blacks, and preserve their faith pure in the midst of paganism. My business, however, at present, is not with these, but with the scowling Pole and the pretty Koptic girl.

Cairo abounds with Sclavonians, half-vagabonds half-gentlemen, several of whom disappear from time to time, without its being very easy to ascertain what has befallen them. On my inquiring of the shopkeeper respecting the Pole in question, he told me he had called there that morning to borrow a few piastres, that he appeared flushed and excited, and promised to return the money, with interest, in a few days.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed my friend, "he no

gib back money, he spends spend, pay jamais; I lend him mush danaro, he no gib back nothing."

I asked him if he knew his story, upon which his face assumed a sort of stolid expression, as if he wished to be supposed not to understand my question. I repeated it, upon which he looked grave, and said he had heard a very odd rumour, but could not at all vouch for its accuracy. The details, however, were as follows:—Brought up as a gentleman, with good prospects, in Poland, this person, whom he called Ladaritz, though that he added he knew was not his name, had married a lady of his own rank, with the prospect, of course never destined to be realized, of becoming the happy father of a family, and transmitting a respectable name to posterity. Within a year after this joyful event, Madame Ladaritz took it into her head to travel, not, however, alone, but in company with a German gentleman, greatly taken up with the pursuit of science.

Though the husband was not regularly informed of their design, and knew not the route they took, he became locomotive in his turn, and fell in with them at Cracow. Some days afterwards two bodies were found floating in the canal, and Ladaritz, whether he had anything to do with the accident or not, made hastily southwards, and passed over into Egypt. Here, by degrees, he saw the bottom of his purse, and as no fresh supplies reached him from Poland, he found himself under the necessity

of living by his wits. A rich old merchant of Alexandria took him into his house in the character of a physician, which he had conveniently assumed. The man died shortly afterwards, and a large quantity of his property was missing; but as it could not be traced to Ladaritz, this worthy disciple of Galen was suffered to resume his travels and pass on to Cairo.

XIII.

Here he led a quiet, and, as far as appeared, a harmless life; but as he had no employment, having abandoned as hopeless the practice of physic, it was a profound mystery to all who knew him how he lived.

"At length," continued the shopkeeper, "he came to me, and for some time, I fear, he has had nothing but what I have supplied him with."

"But are you not afraid," said I, "of being found some morning floating in the Kalish?"

"No, no," answered he, "he knows I have buried my little money, not here, but in another place; and as it would be impossible for him to find the spot, there is no fear. He had much better let me live," added he, rubbing his hands and laughing, "for he gets a few piastres now and then, whereas, if I were dead, he might not easily find another so soft."

On returning from my excursion to the Fayum, I again called on my friend the shopkeeper, with

whom I used frequently to smoke a pipe. His nature had evidently received a shock, as his lively physiognomy almost looked grave.

"Ah!" cried he, when I entered, "that affair of poor Ladaritz ended very badly! But come, let me put the divan to rights for you. There, make yourself comfortable in that corner—the cushions are very soft; and let me light your pipe. I have had many losses within the last few days. Two Arabs, much in my debt, were robbed and murdered by the Mograbins; and an old villain of a Neapolitan, who owed me money, died yesterday, leaving not a single para for his creditors. So you see, it is bad work, this shopkeeping. Stay, just let me adjust the charcoal. There, pull a little—one—two—three—it goes beautifully, doesn't it?"

I nodded assent, and with a single bound he returned to Ladaritz.

"As I was telling you, that was a sad affair. You had scarcely been gone two days, when he came here, just as I was closing up in the evening, and begged I would lend him my best tarboosh and the crimson sash I usually put on when I go out holiday-making. He said, he was to see a lady that night in the company of her friends, and wished to make as good an appearance as possible. After many hums and hahs, I consented, but on condition he should tell me who the lady was, and what were his objects in visiting her. He replied, she was very beautiful, that he was very much in

love, and that if her parents would not give her to him, he would kill her and himself, and, perhaps, the whole family besides.

"I replied, that would be very wicked, and if such were his plans, I would not lend him my sash and my tarboosh. He then took me by the hand, and said it was all nonsense, that he had been invited to supper by a rich Koptic merchant, and that he was determined to fascinate somebody, and get a wife if he could. He now really seemed so merry, that I fell readily into the trap, lent him my tarboosh—a very expensive article, my crimson shawl, which cost me twenty-seven dollars, and let him have besides some money, that he might be able to ride to the house, and give the customary presents to the slaves on going away.

"I was to hear next morning without fail of what befel him. The day came, and passed, and no tidings of Ladaritz; another and another day too, and I began to tremble for my shawl, my fez cap, and the money. Just as I was thinking on these things, a young Polish gentleman, whom I had before seen once or twice, entered my shop, and sitting down on that corner of the divan, he said to me, 'Grimkowski, did you know our countryman Ladaritz?'

"'Oh! to be sure,' answered I, 'and it was only three or four days ago that I lent him my fez, and my shawl, which he promised to return next morning.'

"'Poor fellow,' replied my young visitor, 'he will never return them to you.'

"'What, then, has he bolted?' I exclaimed, getting a little angry.

"'Listen,' said he, 'and I will tell you the whole story. Late one evening he went to visit the Koptic merchant, Yacub, who has a large and picturesque old house on the great canal, where many Kopts were assembled to meet the European guest. Ladaritz, you know, spoke the language of Egypt well, and being an adept in bold fictions, had represented himself to Yacub as a man of great opulence, with estates and palaces in Poland, which it was his intention never to revisit, but having disposed of his property by means of agents, to settle in Cairo. He hinted, however, that having grown weary of a single life, he was desirous of putting the crown to his happiness, by a marriage with Yacub's daughter, Ensife.

"'Though versed in business and the world, the worthy Kopt suffered himself to be deluded, and Ladaritz being very pressing, it was agreed, contrary to all precedent, that the marriage should take place next day.

"'The day came, the ceremony was performed, and after a splendid entertainment, the bride and bridegroom retired to their chamber. Scarcely, however, had the door been closed, ere a Turkish officer burst into the apartment,—come to arrest Ladaritz on a charge of murder,—while several of his followers surrounded the door. Upon this our gloomy and ferocious countryman, who had not

even had time to lay aside his weapons, drew his yatagan and made a dash at the officer. Ensife rushed forward to throw herself on her husband's breast, but had not advanced two paces ere a ball from one of the Janissaries' pistols passed through her heart. Ladaritz retreated towards a window which opened into a narrow balcony overhanging the canal. Along this he hoped, poor fellow, to make his escape, by climbing up to the roof and getting on to that of another house. But the soldiers pursued him too closely, and he had scarcely mounted the underwork, and placed his hand on the parapet, ere several shots entered his breast at once, and down he tumbled splash into the Kalish, dead as a herring.

When the body was picked up and examined, this memorandum was found in his pocket, from which you will see that he had learned where you have concealed your cash, and meant on the first opportunity to avail himself of the discovery. To this is appended a list of persons assassinated; it is not said by himself, but from the minute account of the way in which they fell, and of the booty consequent on each achievement, it can scarcely be doubted that Ladaritz knew much more of the affair than was altogether pleasant. He has now gone, poor fellow, and I must own that in spite of everything I regret him.'

"And I," continued Grimkowski, "should have regretted him too, but that he knew the secret of my

cash, and might have knocked me on the head to get possession of it. But, as you observe, he is gone now, and it is of no use to say any more about it. Still, I wish he had sent me back my red cap and my shawl which cost me twenty-seven dollars."

XIV.

Truth would seem to be a capricious principle, which will readily accommodate itself to one class of things, while it refuses to form any alliance with others equally trustworthy and respectable. Everybody, of course, remembers the caustic remark made on the learned Vossius by Charles II. "Poor Isaac," said the courtly profligate, "will believe anything but the Bible." It is the same with a great many travellers. There is nothing in the annals of ancient Egypt too absurd to command their belief; but if you require them to credit anything connected with religious traditions, they arm themselves at once in a panoply of philosophy, and become invulnerable to the weightiest testimony and the sharpest arguments.

With these rigid idolaters of fact I have no sympathy. The slightest and most airy tradition has power to awaken my feelings and kindle my curiosity. It is enough in such cases for me that mankind have been in the habit of believing this or that, and given a local habitation and a name to the offspring of some legend, possibly, of very doubtful origin. I accept their acquiescence as an

argument, as an historical proof, almost as a demonstration. While at Cairo, therefore, I could not remain insensible to the attractions of the sacred sycamore, under which the Virgin, with the infant Saviour in her arms, is supposed to have rested during the flight into Egypt.

It was now spring, and the air, filled with genial and balmy influences, had allured forth from the bosom of the earth innumerable wild flowers, which thickly sprinkled the lawns and meadows on the way to Heliopolis. Here and there, too, there were fields, with the hay newly mown, and its fragrance profusely impregnated the atmosphere. Who can explain the laws which regulate our sensations and reminiscences? Through the perfume of these hay-fields, a thousand pictures of home, of youth and infancy, came rushing upon my imagination; homesteads and green lanes, haycocks and twilight walks, with feelings and associations fresh as the fresh heart could inspire.

I may truly say, therefore, that mounted, like Balaam, on an ass, I rode to the ruin of the city where Joseph deluded the hopes of Potiphar's wife, through thickly piled-up strata of English ideas. This may explain, perhaps, why the East never appears to us as it really is. We carry in our minds the colours with which we paint the landscape, and our descriptions are a compound of memory and experience.

But how shall I convey an idea of the aspect of nature on that day! the sun's golden light, flooding

the sky and sheathing the earth with splendour, seemed to penetrate mountains, mosques, woods, thickets and hedge-rows, and render them transparent, almost unreal. Everything I saw assumed the appearance of being composed of the solar rays, which, striking violently on the nerves of vision, rendered the whole body full of light.

Would that I could revive the landscape, and place it rich and luminous before the reader's mind! the porphyry mountains on the right rising like ruddy exhalations into the blue sky; in the distance on the left the Pyramids, flaming with glory; and before me, masses of mimosas and palm-trees, redolent of the patriarchal ages, waving, twinkling, fluttering in the gentle breeze. But the sky, what words will describe it! The arch of the horizon, immensely increased in altitude, stretched over us like molten amethyst, glowing with splendour, and around the chariot of Aroeris, insufferably bright.

But I relinquish the task, and return to my own humble proceedings. On this occasion, I was accompanied by Vere only—I mean of Europeans, for Suleiman, of course, was there with the Arabs to whom our beasts belonged. We passed the Lake of the Elephant, and the Lake of the Pilgrims, and arrived while it was still morning at the citron grove marking the southern extremity of Heliopolis, and containing the celebrated Fountain of the Sun, which legendary writers once fabled to

have sprung from the earth to quench the thirst of the Virgin after traversing the desert.

Here, in the north, groves and woods are agreeable during a very small portion of the year, being far too chill or damp to be frequented at other times. But in the south, to enter from the fiery sunshine into the dense shade of trees is inexpressibly delicious. It is like sea-bathing in summer; you plunge into the obscure atmosphere as into the cool waves, and experience a bracing sensation, a relief to the eyes, an allurement to repose, perfectly irresistible. The orange and citron groves of Heliopolis are, besides, slightly odoriferous, for the delicate white blossoms which always hang on the branches, together with the fruit, exhale incessantly a faint fragrance. It is almost like treading on beds of wild thyme, which suggested the comparison of flowers with virtue, because the more they are crushed, the more do their sweetness and excellence appear.

There is, however, little sentiment remaining in Egypt, otherwise the Fountain of the Sun would not be left, as it is, choked with weeds and overhung with a matting of coarse plants. It should have emerged to light through tubes of gold, and reposed in basins of alabaster. It pleased my fancy as I bent over it, to think its placid waters had reflected the face of the Virgin, that Christ had drunk of them, and that ages before, when the valley began to be inhabited, the wild warriors of

the desert had probably stuck their spears in the sands beside it, as they knelt to drink.

The Sycamore is near at hand, but while the elements are eternal and endued with perpetual youth, all that springs up and flourishes, decays likewise. The venerable tree is now in its decrepitude, like the faith to which chiefly it owes its celebrity; for it is not so much a Christian as a Catholic monument, and belongs to that system of legends and traditions by which the Church of Rome has sought to impress a sacred character on so many places and things in the East.

The old tree is like the Popedom: storms have rent away immense limbs from it, lightnings have smitten and blasted it, barbarians from all lands have mutilated and deformed it, some through the rage for relics, others through a feeling more despicable still—the vanity of exhibiting a contempt for them. But as I have said, the tree is there, putting forth fresh leaves every spring, and trying to look young. It was lofty, green and spreading when the crusaders poured into the East; it witnessed the persecutions of Maximin and Dioclesian; it was young in the days of Herod, and probably preceded the irruption of the Macedonians into Egypt. But as we look upon it, the mind reverts with pleasure to one tradition only, that which represents the Virgin sitting in womanly meekness beneath its shade, suckling her divine infant, and filled meanwhile with visions of the time to come.

It is impossible to contemplate this group, which naturally includes St. Joseph, without remembering the sculptures on the Egyptian monuments representing Isis engaged in the same sacred duty, with Osiris looking on; and as Isis is woman, not an individual, but the whole sex personified, the Virgin herself is included within the original idea of the Goddess. Indeed, whatever is feminine and beautiful seems to have been referred by the Egyptian sages to Isis.

XV.

From the Sycamore we proceeded to the Obelisk, then standing flanked by rubbish mounds in a field of young corn. All possible reflections have, of course, been made on the mutability of fortune and the vicissitudes of human affairs, but they nevertheless always suggest themselves to the mind as if perfectly fresh, in situations like that in which we stood. Formerly the space round this splendid monument was adorned with buildings, sacred or profane, and thronged with population, for it arose in the midst of a great city, displaying the utmost magnificence of the Egyptian kings.

All traces, however, of that grandeur have now disappeared, save this single monument, which the Arab peasant beholds with ignorant wonder as he surrounds it annually with a carpet of emerald. This, like other obelisks, is covered on its four sides with hieroglyphic inscriptions, which tell a

story unintelligible to us, notwithstanding the labours of Young and Champollion. Nor could it be otherwise; for the connexion between the symbols and the ideas represented being lost, it would avail nothing, even could the discovery be demonstrated that the hieroglyphics were only so many alphabetical characters; for, though we could master the signs and sounds, we should be as far as ever from understanding what they signified.

XVI.

The mind can scarcely represent to itself all that is implied by the extinction of a language. It is not that certain arbitrary signs and sounds, by which a nation's ideas were wont to be expressed, cease to be used; but that a whole system of thought, an entire fabric of civilization, is obliterated from the tablets of existence.

What dear and familiar things are designated by certain idiomatic phrases which vanish altogether with the idiom itself! Had the language of the Egyptians come down to us, their political and social existence would not have been an enigma. We should have beheld their living forms of thought, the shapes assumed among them by friendly communion, the vocabulary of science, the terminology of art, the idiosyncrasies of philosophy, and the strange and startling metempsychosis of the affections. Their sculptured and painted monuments would then have held a sort of

intercourse with us; we should have been able to enter into the thoughts and feelings of the mother and the child, of the wife and the husband, of the neighbour and the friend, of the magistrate and the people, of the judge and the criminal, of the priest and hierophant and deliverer of oracles, and the popular congregations thronging in wild expectancy around them.

A people can never be said to die when it bequeathes its language to posterity. The better part of man, that in which he most resembles his Creator, is the vast body of his thoughts, that mighty ideal universe which he calls necessarily into existence, and disposes in order and beauty, and fills with vitality, and interpenetrates with light until it becomes for him as real as the world of matter in which he lives. Here whatever is imperishable in his affections finds its home: here he loves and hates, remembers and forgets, enjoys and suffers, and pours forth the worship of his soul towards the infinite Source of good.

But the language of the Egyptians has perished, and they are really, therefore, a dead people. Learning will never succeed in the attempt to pour vitality into their hieroglyphics. As well might we aim at imparting stability to the clouds. By exerting the powers of our imagination we may doubtless call up before us gorgeous theories to captivate and bewilder ourselves and others; but while we contemplate them, they shift and change,

and pass into fresh categories of opinion. We know not distinctly from them what on any subject the Egyptians thought. That they felt, and acted, and suffered upon the whole very much like us, we may infer, because all mankind do the same. But to affirm this is to affirm nothing. What we desire is, to ascertain by what peculiarities of sentiment, and passion, and affection, and joy, and hope, and fear, the intercourse of domestic life was characterised. But this is precisely what is beyond our reach, and unless we could concentrate the rays of learning, and throw them so warmly and vividly upon the opaque atmosphere of antiquity, as to revive the colours which have been so long faded, there is and can be no hope of our thoroughly comprehending the strange but mighty nation which once held sway on the banks of the Nile, and illuminated with its system of ideas all the circumjacent countries.

XVII.

Let it not, however, be supposed that the relics of the old Egyptians impart so melancholy an aspect to the Valley that one can do nothing there but moralize and look sad. The reverse is the case. In Cairo, at least, one thinks of little else than enjoyment, and the question always is, which to prefer.

With all my respect for the mummy-makers, I usually gave precedence to the things of the

hour, invested with a sort of romantic halo by the history and traditions of El-Islam. The wealth of the city in pleasures and amusements perplexed me. When I got up in the morning I could hardly tell whether I should first go to the Hammams, to the Bazaars, to the Coffee-houses, or to the Mosques, or, extending my rambles beyond the city walls, should proceed to the cemeteries to witness there, in the shade of some ancient tomb, the performances of the dancing-girls.

Where the warmth of the atmosphere is so great, one very often, it may naturally be supposed, allows the Baths to take precedence of everything else. This in the East is quite a social enjoyment. You don't retreat like a monk into your cell, to plunge into a marble excavation filled with warm water, but, let your party be ever so numerous, go through the various processes together; otherwise, as they are often protracted through several hours, you would die of ennui.

Ladies usually take their breakfast in the Baths, but we who possessed a keener appetite, breakfasted at home, to provide against the exhaustion of friction, vapour, and hot water. Asses, the universal equipages of Egypt, carried us to the Hammams, where, alighting at the arched doorway, we were conducted through various passages to the spacious chamber in which we were to deposit our habiliments. Here we were supplied with a large towel to wrap round our waists, after

which, in other respects naked, we each put on a pair of high wooden pattens, and followed our pale and dingy-looking guide through a long suite of apartments, all filled and obscured by clouds of vapour, growing hotter and hotter as we advanced. How other persons are affected by the aspect of those buildings, I know not, but they certainly appeared to me singularly striking, with their lofty halls, diverging corridors, niches, cupolas, domes, marble cisterns, and furnaces, with throngs of naked Muslims stalking silently, like spectres, through the dim light.

Here you have an opportunity of judging accurately the physical structure of the Orientals, who, you discover, are generally symmetrical and well-proportioned, with broad chests and muscular limbs. Occasionally in the midst of these jolly fellows a scarecrow will flit by like an apparition, but these lean specimens of our race are certainly not numerous in the Hammams of Cairo.

Similar sociability prevailed in the baths of ancient Greece, which, together with the exhibitions of the Athletæ, enabled its artists to acquire that superior knowledge of the human figure which distinguishes them on the whole from the artists of other nations. If there had been any Phidias or Praxiteles in Cairo, he would doubtless in the interest of his art have spent his mornings at the Hammams, where he would be able to study models of all kinds, from Heracles to Antinous.

It is a sad thing for a spiritual creature to acknowledge, but truth must be spoken; and, therefore, I confess, that while going through the processes of a bath at Cairo, my sensations were very much like those we attribute to the Epicurean deities of Olympos. When your whole frame is tingling with full health, it is delicious to experience the feeling of relaxation excited by sitting or reclining in an atmosphere of warm vapour. You seem to be melting away with delight into the voluptuous fluid around you.

Then you recline on a slab of warm marble, while your attendant with a handful of silver fibres from the Mekka palm-tree, dipped in a preparation of saponaceous and odoriferous earths, rubs you gently from head to foot, till you are enveloped in white foam. He then dips a ladle of bronze into a marble cistern, and indulges you with copious lustrations of warm water. Some of my companions underwent shampooing, which they described as the greatest enjoyment of all, but this I declined, and therefore, whatever mysterious gratification may be afforded by it, I must leave to be explained by the initiated.

There was an old Arab Sheikh, brown as a berry, seriously engaged in having his joints cracked, beside the next basin to mine. He had, perhaps, never before beheld an European *in puris naturalibus*, so he paused from his important occupation to gaze at me, no doubt as a monster. It

probably perplexed him to conceive what business a man had with so white a skin, thinking, I dare say, I was the unhealthy production of a climate in which human beings resembled plants, growing in air untempered by light.

After beholding me for a time in mute astonishment, he ventured, with little hesitation, to make inquiries about my health, observing that I seemed indeed robust and vigorous, but that I must doubtless be recovering from some fit of sickness which had deprived my skin of all colour. This drew a shout of laughter from the attendants, who had often seen Englishmen at the Hammams, at which the Sheikh would have been offended, but that I pacified him by observing that the sun of England was very much like a moon, compared with the fiery sun of the Upper Nile. Upon this explanation he thanked God he had not been born in the north, and proceeded through the other operations of the Bath.

XVIII.

When we had remained as long as there seemed to be anything new to witness, we had a sort of linen cloak thrown over us, and retreated towards the dressing-room, through chambers growing cooler by a graduated scale, till we arrived in one, the warmth of which little exceeded that of the external atmosphere. Here a number of luxurious beds having been prepared for us, in we

plunged, and drawing up the sheets close to our chins, were served with pipes and coffee.

Now came the acmé of the pleasure of the Hammams. A glow indescribably delicious pervaded the whole frame, causing a gentle perspiration, which trickled over the skin like fine dew. This process was promoted by sipping the hot coffee, and smoking the fragrant Gebeli. As we lay thus over canopied by clouds of smoke, a band of singers and musicians entered, and seating themselves on a low divan, indulged us with a concord of sweet sounds.

Of course it is necessary for Europeans, in order to exalt their characters as critics and connoisseurs, to ridicule unmercifully the music of the East. It is perhaps my ignorance in these matters which renders me impartial, but I must plead guilty to having derived much enjoyment from the performance of those Orphic mystics, who, in their way, breathe a soul into sound on the banks of the Nile. A great deal, no doubt, depends on one's frame of mind at the moment. I was prepared, possibly, to enjoy anything, and, perhaps, more than half our pleasures in this life derive the power they exert over us from the accidental harmony of our souls themselves. The music is in us, and the undulations of the air, as they pass over us and strike upon our sensorium, only impart activity to the eternal sources of melody within. It is there we have to seek the true music of the spheres, for when the

soul is finely attuned, it drinks in harmony from all nature, and converts the whole universe into one vast instrument, throbbing and vibrating to the pulsations of music.

The reader will easily perceive how tolerant I am, especially where Arabs are concerned, and how little disposed to cavil at the efforts good people make in any part of the earth to afford me pleasure. I would not for the world have them suppose that they had missed their aim. When a man does his best, or woman either, why should one throw cold water on his or her enthusiasm? In the intercourse of this life, things should not be estimated at their intrinsic value, but by the kind or unkind intentions of those who present them to us. This is the philosophy which evolved a treasure from the widow's mite, and made it transcend the costly gifts of the opulent, and the ostentatious offerings of princes and rulers.

The singers to whom we listened, though nothing doubtless if compared with the seirens of the North, were yet possessed of sweet voices, and wielded them skilfully after the manner of the East. Several of their songs were highly pathetic, and the tears as they proceeded fell over their cheeks like rain. But, shall I confess it?—not a tear could I force out in reply. I was much too happy to indulge even in mimic sorrow: and if I had shed tears, they would have signified nothing; for the eyes at such times are like flowers in the morning,

which, when shaken by the breeze, scatter about the dew without knowing it. I am far more inclined now, when looking back on those agreeable moments, across the gulf of years, to become pathetic over them; for I regret that they are gone, never to return more. The apartment, with all its appurtenances, rises up before me. I see the musicians and the singers, and I hear the mingling sound of their voices and instruments issuing faintly from the abysses of the past. Multitudes of other thoughts and other sensations have swept over my mind since then, and though they have not rendered it incapable of delight, have yet accustomed it to a different system of ideas.

The song which most pleased me was Syrian, describing in wild bursts the grandeur of Lebanon, and the loves of a Muslim youth and maiden amidst those magnificent solitudes. Say what we will here in the West, the Orientals are not incapable of elevating their thoughts to the level of true love, for wherever there is disinterestedness and self-sacrifice, and a projection of the ideas beyond the sphere of individual existence, there the genuine passion exists, let the language by which it is interpreted be what it may.

XIX.

If I were to live in Cairo for fifty years, I think I should be able to amuse myself, supposing me to enjoy good health, and have nothing else to do.

Suleiman and I were always agreed on this point, especially when, late in the evening, we went to some spacious coffee-house in the Turkish quarter to smoke and listen to the narratives of the story-tellers.

We are all ready enough to attribute to ancient Greece the possession of an unwritten literature, if one may so speak, which, created by certain individuals or classes, passed orally from mind to mind, and from age to age, acquiring, contrary to what takes place in wine, additional body and richness at every stage of transmission. It is the same to this day with the Muslims of the East. Some few books, indeed, they have, but these are so costly, and the art of reading is comparatively so rare, that the great ocean of ideas overflowing the mental basis of society in that part of the world, has never yet been enclosed in separate jars, appropriated and labelled with the names of individuals. Like the air, it is common to everybody, but there are nevertheless certain persons, who, taking as much of it as they can into their minds, deliver it forth again in an agreeable way for the amusement of the public.

On these expeditions few of my European friends ever accompanied me. Suleiman was my fidus Achates, and many were the pleasant hours we enjoyed in those dusky coffee-houses, witnessing the enthusiasm of the Arabs, when some Muslim hero or heroine emerged triumphantly from a sea of trials and troubles to affluence or power.

Usually, the story-tellers are men; but there was at that time in Cairo, among the Ghawazi, one girl, who, in her knowledge of stories and histories, rivalled Sheherazade herself, and was besides little less fascinating and beautiful. Her name was Fatima, and she was a Muslim, though she has elsewhere been spoken of as a Christian. Fatima was what we should call a fashionable novelist, who, possessing a fertile imagination and extremely good taste, added many new and superior tales to the body of fiction circulating through the Mohammedan world.

Gray, who placed the summum bonum in lying on a sofa, reading eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon, would have greatly modified his theory, had he witnessed the performances of Fatima. He would then have put in exchange for his old system, sitting pipe in hand on a coffee-house divan, in Cairo, listening late in the evening to this bewitching reciter, as she poured forth one after another her tales of magic, adventure, or love. She suggested to me the idea of what Pasta must have been in youth. Let me describe her costume and figure;—tall and full-bosomed, with an oval countenance, regular features, and immense black eyes; she looked a sort of swarthy Cleopatra; and her dress, though of comparatively humble materials, would not have been altogether unsuitable to that voluptuous queen. On her head she wore a turban of green and gold,

from beneath which her hair descended in dusky profusion over her shoulders; her pelisse was crimson, edged with white fur; her vest dark purple, flowered with gold, and a gauze chemise with broad lappets thrown open upon her breast; around her waist was twisted a light Kashmir shawl, from which peeped forth a poignard with jewelled hilt; a pair of loose trowsers, pale pink with silver sprigs, descended to her bare feet, which were very white, and appeared more so by contrast with her dark red slippers.

When she stood up to narrate, her eyes downcast and modest, her arms crossed upon her breast, she appeared to me the very impersonation of the East,—all calm without, though all fire within.

Having pronounced the exordium, generally an enumeration of the perfections of God and an eulogium on the Prophet, she stretched forth one hand in a way to invite, or rather to command attention, and the narrative went on flowing like a full stream, with infinitely varied intonations of voice, and breaks, and pauses, and cadences, which converted her performance into a species of acting.

Whoever has read the "Tales of the Rhamadhan," will remember the sort of stories in which Fatima excelled. Not that I can pretend to have preserved their spirit, which I probably could not have done even had I taken down the narratives in short-hand from her lips, so much of grace, interest, and fascination was imparted to them by

her figure, voice, and manner, by the locality in which they were heard, and by the crowd of bearded and swarthy listeners, who formed her audience, and seemed an integral part of the exhibition.

But I must be just; many of Fatima's stories, the fullest unquestionably of merit in other respects, the wildest, the most grand and gorgeous, were such as it would be impossible to relate before an European audience. Modest she was, according to the notions of her country, but I often felt my cheeks burn at the language she employed in describing the incidents of her fictions. It is in fact one of the most extraordinary features of Eastern civilization, and one which has evidently characterised it at all times, that language assumes a licence which would be perfectly insufferable in the West.

At the same time, it must be owned that, even among us, young ladies who write often evince a disposition to rival Fatima in liberty of speech, so that some of the least chastened productions of the day are found to proceed from the pens of women. This gives them vogue, this gives them currency, this disarms the severity of criticism, and ensures the suffrage of public opinion. Society, in some parts of Europe, is beginning to display a sort of cynicism akin to that of the East, so that Diogenes in his tub may almost be regarded as its prototype.

XX.

One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Eastern literature, is its childlike simplicity, which, in many thousand years, seems to have undergone little or no alteration. Innumerable fashions have succeeded each other in the West, where genius has put on every conceivable metamorphosis, and grown tired of them all, until at length it has become a crime to be in earnest, to set any positive value on your thoughts and feelings, or to aim at possessing the unsophisticated sympathy of your readers. What was said of Cato must seem to be true of you: you must affect to despise fame, and while you are secretly labouring to cozen the public into bestowing it, must appear to regard it with superb disdain, as a thing wholly beneath your notice. Glory will then pursue you as it did him of Utica, precisely because you affect to shun it. Besides, the world loves to be despised, or will at least, for the sake of amusement, tolerate those who scorn it.

I find it difficult to explain my conception of Oriental character, especially among the Arabs. I would not convey the impression that they are free from hypocrisy, that they are never insincere, that they are disinterested, benevolent, and indifferent to riches: quite the contrary. There is,

perhaps, no nation in the world which delights as much as they do in magnificence and splendour, or which has committed so many crimes to obtain possession of them; but in carrying out their designs, they are, if I may so speak, true to themselves and their principles. They regard life in all its modifications and developments as something very serious, and whatever they undertake to do, no matter whether it be little or great, good or bad, they throw themselves entirely into it, and do it with all their might. They would scorn to imitate the affectation of Julius Cæsar, who listened to reading and dictated to three or four secretaries at the same time, without, of course, properly understanding either what he heard or what he wrote.

The Arab is all ear when he listens, all reflection when he writes, all mendacity when he lies, all passion and earnestness when he loves. His literature is the image of his character: his faith being boundless, no restraint is ever put on his invention; he has worlds of spirits, good and bad, at his command; nature for him obeys no laws, but the arbitrary will of God, which operates in a way intelligible and conceivable by no man. He is surrounded, therefore, by infinite miracles, which he believes as sincerely as that the Nile flows or the sun rises; the earth has its ghouls, its jinn, and its effrits, with indefinite powers of good and evil, which may be controlled and regulated by men or women who have gone through certain

studies, subsisted on certain kinds of food, prayed, fasted, and otherwise behaved in conformity with certain formulas.

Then again, as to the moral world, he attaches impropriety to no form of speech which describes what is done, or thought, or projected in the world. With us, language is not by any means the counterpart of our ideas; we think much that we dare not utter, and in many cases half the struggles of our lives are exhausted in the attempt, under certain disguises, to lay before our fellow-creatures the result of our researches and speculations.

It is otherwise in the East. As far as art can succeed in embodying intellectual forms, literature is a complete and faithful image of the nation's spiritual and moral life. Whatever is dared to be done is dared to be spoken, which must be Fatima's apology for describing in her narratives innumerable incidents, which, in London, or even in Paris, would put a whole mixed audience to flight.

Perhaps the true explanation is, that the sexes, when listening to stories, are separated from each other. In the coffee-houses there are none but men; in the harims there are few but women,—that is to say, none but the master of the house and his sons; but before these the most portentous things are uttered. An audience composed of both sexes, friends, relatives, and neighbours, would require a

different style of narration, and consequently modify the literature of the eastern world, which is lax, because it speaks to the sexes apart.

XXI.

Thrice happy are they, who, like the old French lady, *ont toujours raison;* no regrets sadden, no difficulties perplex them. If it be their pleasure to write a book, the plan grows up of itself; everything jumps into proper place; and when the affair is completed, the world has nothing to do but sit still, and read in silent admiration.

I am not, alas! one of those fortunate few. Here have I, for example, to describe a journey to the Fayúm, across the desert, when its fierce and lawless children were all in rebellion against the Pasha, and I know not where to bring it in or what to do with it. Adopt what course I may, I fear I shall be sinning against the unities, as Aristotle has laid them down, and the Abbé Dubos interpreted them. But there is no help. I must regard my Isis as a sort of irregular epopœa, admitting everywhere of episodes and digressions, and aiming at nothing whatever but giving pleasure to the reader. If this be accomplished, one need be very little solicitous about the rest. That design is always good which answers its purpose, as the aim is necessarily true which hits the mark.

This journey was not undertaken during my first visit to Cairo, but afterwards, in a more genial

season of the year; that is to say, when spring had sprinkled the whole valley of the Nile with wild flowers and fresh verdure, and done quite as much for my fancy, which, owing to the peculiar influences of the country, was perpetually running away with me. My companion was the eternal Vere, who stuck to me like my shadow; so we were a sort of hyperborean Castor and Pollux.

There were others in Cairo who felt a strong inclination to accompany us, but were deterred by the representations of certain individuals, who, without being at all aware they were speaking the truth, said it was extremely dangerous to visit the Fayúm. In our case these fictions—for fictions they were supposed to be—originated in a desire to preserve a sort of monopoly of Egypt, a thing difficult to be achieved, especially in these days.

The evening before our departure, I paid a visit to one of the learned Thebans who were to have borne us company, and found him in a state of extreme vacillation. He had consulted the oracle, and the response had been unfavourable to the journey. He was resolved, therefore, not to risk his throat, which it was predicted would certainly be cut if he went, whether by us or by the Arabs was not distinctly stated. While I conversed with him, however, his resolution changed, and he said he would run all risks rather than lose a chance that might never again occur. But then came to mind the prediction of his hieroglyphical friend,

and he retracted the promise he had made, and began, as was very natural, to persuade me not to put my precious life in jeopardy. He was himself, he observed, a single man, and yet did not think it prudent to trust himself among the rebellious Mograbins; how much more foolish, therefore, was it in me, who had left a wife and a whole regiment of children in Switzerland, to tempt fortune by crossing the desert at such a time!

About midnight we discovered what ought to have been evident from the first, that we were both predetermined, I to go and he to remain where he was, hugging himself in the persuasion that I should be speared or shot by the Bedouins, as a warning to all such persons as might feel inclined to rebel against the wisdom of their friends.

XXII.

Next day Vere and I set forth, though not till the afternoon, crossed the Nile at Masr-el-atikeh, and reached the plain of Memphis about an hour before sunset. Our party consisted of Vere and myself, a Mahazi sheikh, who was to serve as guide, and our Arab servant, Abou-Zaid, Suleiman having now left me, and gone to Jerusalem. Our dromedaries were five; that is, one a-piece to ride on, and one to carry water and our kitchen utensils.

Though not vast in dimensions, the plain of Memphis is one of the most magnificent in the

world, fertile even to rankness, and covered with a forest of palm-trees a hundred and twenty feet in height, rising straight and smooth, like mighty columns, to their summits, where they are crowned with a rich capital of fruit and foliage. Through the lateral avenues formed by these gigantic palms, all planted in line, the sun's golden rays were streaming from above the Libyan desert, and falling on herds of buffaloes, strings of laden and mounted camels, and large flights of white ibises everywhere courting the gaze about the ponds and copses. Here and there you beheld a village, a hamlet, or a sheikh's tomb, with delicate wreaths of smoke arising from the fires on which the Arabs were cooking their evening meal, and ascending lazily through the serene atmosphere.

And what now was Memphis? A few misshapen heaps, resembling nothing among the works of men, a gigantic statue tumbled down and lying on its face; dust, rubbish, pits, hollows, a place for the bittern and pools of water. The least reflecting cannot, of course, be ignorant that everything human decays; but though this conviction lies on the very threshold, as it were, of all our knowledge, it does not prevent that rush of melancholy thoughts which comes over us irresistibly when we visit the site of mighty cities, whose very ruins have been overwhelmed or obliterated from the face of the earth by time.

This is particularly the case at evening; and to

give the feeling all its force, I came out after dark, to enjoy it alone. There is probably no language sufficiently subtle and delicate to enable one to chronicle one's sentiments at such moments; and, in reality, it is one's sentiments, and not one's thoughts or ideas, that predominate. They are indefinite, indistinct, made up of a fond lingering over the past, of a sympathy, yet envy for the dead, who have happily traversed the boundaries between time and eternity, of a yearning to be with them and at rest, of a strong desire to know what their state really is, of a clinging to life, of wild and shadowy anticipations of the future, of an intense longing to impress the stamp of permanence on our fleeting thoughts, and to enshrine our memories in the mighty structure reared by humanity over all it deems precious or useful and can rescue from the devouring jaws of oblivion.

I sat down on a small heap of ruined brickwork, and looked sadly around me. Trees of gigantic size encircled the spot, except in two places, through one of which I caught a glimpse of the Nile, through the other of the desert. The moon was up, and her white splendour flooded everything, from the vast heavy leaves of the banana to the small delicate foliage of the sant, softly heaving and twinkling to the impulses of the night-air. Here and there about the aspiring heads of the date-palms, the stars and constellations clustered like coronets; and as I gazed and mused, a strong sense of the beauty of

the world, and a profound gratitude to God for having placed me in it, overwhelmed every other feeling. What serenity was around me, what majesty and glory above! Millions, perhaps, of fleeting existences like myself had meditated and looked up to heaven from that spot, and beheld precisely the same stars, at precisely the same hour. Where were they now? Sleeping their everlasting sleep in the mummy-pits of the neighbouring desert, or returned, perhaps, to the dust on which my foot then rested.

But I did not dwell on these things as one without hope. Life springs all from one source, and, whatever forms it may take, must be gathered back at last into the bosom of the Infinite, which confers eternal consciousness on this or that modification as it pleases. I felt myself for a moment lifted up towards God, and was content to repose on him for time and for eternity.

But strange and inscrutable is the nature of our minds. From meditations on empires and generations passed away, my ideas glided, I know not how, to a little chamber on the Leman Lake, where my own baby lay slumbering beside its mother. The feeling with which I was inspired by meditating on multitudes of nameless dead, whose remains were stored up in sepulchral chambers near at hand, was a soothing, gentle melancholy. But what would have been my anguish, what my sorrow and wringing of the heart, had news that moment been brought

me of anything threatening the life, or even the health of that child! Our sympathy with the dead is a sweet sympathy; but with the living, with those you love and cherish, it is a fierce, impetuous passion, which shakes the mind like an earthquake, and disables it for performing its functions calmly. Through the night, through the distance, came to me that vision of home, with children big and little, all, I could not doubt, at that moment, sleeping near their mother.

I started to my feet at the thought, and proceeded hastily towards the village of Mitraheni, where Vere was superintending preparations for supper.

XXIII.

There is, they say, but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous. There is, however, nothing ridiculous about supper, especially when one has a good appetite; and I generally observed that philosophising among ruins made me hungry. An amusing anecdote is told of one of the popes, for whose instruction and humiliation the cardinals kindled in front of the Vatican an immense straw-fire, with this significant sentence over it:—"Thus passes the glory of the world!" His Holiness, a jolly, genial sort of fellow, appreciating perfectly their charitable motives, went up, spread his hands before the blaze, and then rubbing them comfortably together, exclaimed merrily,—"But while it is passing, let's warm ourselves."

With much the same instinct did I return from the ruins of Memphis to supper. But what was my surprise to find Vere, Abou-Zaid, and Mohammed, the Mahazi sheik, surrounded by a host of women, who were gazing with extreme curiosity at them and their culinary operations. This female sanhedrim was composed of individuals of all ages, from the grandmother on her staff to the girl of eight or nine years old, holding tight by her mother's chemise. When I entered, they made way for me, seeing that I was dressed like one of their own effendis, with fez and burnoose, and long black beard descending over my breast, like a derwish. I proposed that we should invite them to supper; but upon examination this was found impossible, as all our provisions for the journey would not have supplied them with a mouthful a-piece. So we gave them instead, handfuls of paras, mingled with piastres, which probably pleased them better.

However, this by no means produced the effect I desired, namely, inducing our fair friends to retire quietly to their homes. They had evidently made up their minds to see the strangers eat, and stood there, laughing and joking, while we devoured our pilau and drank our coffee. Afterwards, when our pipes were lighted, several of them grew more familiar; and a young woman, of about eighteen or nineteen, springing upon the platform, three or four feet high, on which we were sitting, came and planted

herself right in front of me; on which the Mahazi sheikh made several sage observations on her forwardness and impudence. This only encouraged others to follow her example; and in a moment the whole platform was crowded with women, of all ages, whose tongues never for an instant stood still.

Their conversation was decent enough, but their manners altogether contrasted strangely with those of Mohammedan women in general. I never before or afterwards witnessed such freedom amongst modest females in Egypt; for that they really were respectable persons, there could be no doubt. They seemed exactly as if they had been excited by wine, which they certainly had never tasted, probably never seen in their lives. The leader of the chorus, whose intrepidity I have described, soon requested to be allowed to smoke from my pipe; but instead of this I desired Abou-Zaid to light one expressly for her, which, however, I was informed, would not be so great a compliment. The speaker then added that she was the daughter of the sheik in whose house we were; upon which, of course, I handed her the pipe, out of which she drew several whiffs, and then returned it, greatly gratified.

At length we hit upon a plan which we could not doubt would clear the room in a moment, which was, causing Abou-Zaid to announce we were going to bed. But to witness this they considered the greatest treat of all, so they determined to remain.

Abou-Zaid then unrolled our mattresses, spread the clothes over them, adjusted the pillows, and piled up the baggage between us and the wall. We then lay down—people never undress in the East—drew the coverlets over us, and wished the ladies good night. But they perversely determined to continue still, and would probably have remained there chattering till morning, had not drowsiness at length put me out of temper. Jumping up suddenly, I extinguished the lamp, upon which they rushed pell-mell to the door, and got out in a few seconds. Abou-Zaid then crept down and bolted it after them; and in a short time we were fast asleep.

XXIV.

Though we quitted Mitraheni next morning long before the sun was up, several of our fair visitors of the preceding night had collected to behold us depart, expecting, probably, a renewal of the ceremony of distributing piastres and paras. But no one can be generous before breakfast. We, therefore, kept our purses hermetically sealed, mounted our dromedaries, and set out, leaving our visitors, I fear, greatly disgusted at the proceeding.

On quitting the village we passed through a number of bean-fields in flower, and the fragrance which filled the air was so rich as to be almost overpowering. The wind, blowing from the west, was gentle and balmy, and braced our frames and

raised our spirits, till we could hardly contain ourselves. I found myself smiling perpetually, without rhyme or reason; rejoicing instinctively, I suppose, at the fact that I was alive. It seemed, indeed, almost a joke to imagine that anybody had ever died or been miserable in that valley—everything we beheld appeared so full of vitality and beauty. The bean and clover fields, the mimosa groves, the date-palms, the towering sycamores, the towns, the villages, the hamlets, the undulating sands of the desert, bordering the green valley like a margin of gold; the Nile, the Porphyry Mountains in the east, with the deluge of saffron light surging upwards every moment in the sky;—all these things, with health, and hope, and joyousness in our frames, made us so happy, that we could neither speak nor keep it wholly to ourselves.

I verily believe that devotion is natural to man, and that when he is happy it arises from his heart, and floats up like a cloud of incense to the skies. It may not always take the form of words—indeed, it does not—but it is an overflowing of the finite into the infinite, an irradiation from the soul, which, by giving a sort of vent to the feeling, increases it.

The atrabilious or discontented reader will probably wonder what on earth could make me so happy; or, if such be the necessary reward of travelling along the skirts of the desert, why everybody does not go to Egypt. But it might not answer with everybody. I only know it answered

with me, and with such health as I then enjoyed, such recollections and such hopes, I would gladly protract my mortal existence for ever. The heart of man could scarcely contain a greater or more concentrated delight than I then enjoyed. The act of breathing seemed like music, such was the harmony of body and mind. Possibly it may have been all mechanical, caused by the pure air of the desert, which first gave the health, and then converted it into an indescribable luxury.

Vere used frequently to remark, as we rode on our dromedaries along the sands, dressed in the most ludicrous costume imaginable, smiling or laughing without apparent cause, that if seen going down Regent Street in the same manner, we should certainly be taken for two madmen.

XXV.

Just as the sun showed himself above the Arabian Mountains, we reached a sheikh's tomb, old, dilapidated, and deserted. Here we determined to breakfast, and Abou-Zaid and Mohammed kindled their charcoal fire in the interior, while we sat on the sand without, leaning lazily against the wall, smoking our pipes, and feeling the pleasant warmth of the sun falling on our cheeks. My reputation as a philosopher has long ago been done for with the reader, and therefore I need affect no reserve, but go on indulging with more Homeric freedom than Homer himself, in my descriptions of eating and

drinking. Just imagine a sheik's tomb on the edge of the desert, surrounded by fine soft sand, studded here and there with the delicate feathery mimosa, whose fresh, bright green leaves were put gently in motion by the morning breeze; imagine the emerald valley before us, and behind the Libyan waste, with the consciousness we were just about to enter upon it; then imagine five camels, crouched like so many huge cats on the sand, eating perfectly at their ease the prickly plants, which, to save them the trouble of motion, Mohammed had cut and thrown before them; lastly, imagine brimming bowls of coffee, aromatic, and rich with cream, fresh white cakes, covered with marmalade, kabobs crackling from the fire, eggs, fresh cheese, and half a dozen other luxuries, with an appetite like a wolf's, and you will be able to form some idea of the breakfast we made over the remains of some dear old derwish, who probably had spent his life in doing good, and now in death lent his tomb as a breakfast parlour to a couple of wandering infidels from the west!

When the camels were laden, and just before mounting, the Mahazi sheikh requested us to see that our fire-arms were loaded and in good order, for we should now have to traverse a portion of the desert in which we might every moment expect to stand in need of them. Vere, though a parson, was as brave as a lion, and indeed by right ought to have been a captain of Grenadiers; and for my-

self, I was much too well to be able to realize any kind of danger to my mind. I therefore loaded my pistols as I would have filled my pipe, and may add that the probability or the chances of a conflict rather augmented than diminished the pleasure with which I left the cultivated valley, and struck out into that ocean of sand, which extends, with few interruptions, across the whole continent of Africa.

XXVI.

Many of my readers have doubtless been on the ocean out of sight of land. If they have, they will acknowledge the feeling to be sublime. But the desert is far more magnificent. When you lose sight of the haunts of man, and leave behind you all traces of his civilization, you feel yourself to be in the company of Nature, and your thoughts soar and dilate in the effort to admit into your soul the conception of her august presence.

This to me was the acme of physical gratification. Forgetting altogether my personal identity, I looked forth and beheld below in the universe nothing but a vast luminous superficies of rocks and sand, with the stainless sky and fiery sun above. The heat was intense, but instead of being oppressive, it seemed to inspire me with tenfold energy. The dromedaries evidently experienced the same invigorating influence, for they flew over the waste with a rapidity that surprised us,—now ascending a rocky

ridge, now descending into one of those hollows which alternate with the ridges, like long swells and depressions in the Atlantic.

No wonder the Bedouin should be attached to his home. Green groves and meadows, grassy slopes, fountains, Alps and rivers have their charms; but the desert is the place for the independent mind, which delights to throw off all shackles, and feel as free as if it were alone on the earth. I contemplate that moment as the brightest of my existence, when, for a while at least, I was cut off from artificial society, and realized transiently a dream in which the greater part of my youth had been cradled.

I regard what I am now writing very much in the light of a confession, intended not by any means to exalt myself, but that the reader may be gratified by thinking how much more wisely he or she has thought and acted than I have. For this reason all the truth—as far at least as it is connected with the subject—shall out here. Shortly after marriage I retired with my wife to a country-town on the sea-shore, for the purpose of maturing and carrying out a plan we had long formed. This was to leave Christendom altogether, traverse the Mediterranean and join some of the tribes of Bedouins in the desert about Palmyra. To enable me to carry this design into execution, I studied assiduously the Arabic language, and read daily the Koran and the histories and traditions of El-Islam;

that I might not on my arrival among the Ishmaelites be an entire stranger to their system of ideas and belief.

That we did not pursue and perfect this plan, was owing to no caprice or infirmity of purpose on our part, but to the adverse influences of fortune; and now that the time for realizing the wishes of those days has gone by, and given me other ties and prospects, I confess it has been one of the lasting regrets of my life that we were not then enabled to make the desert our home, amid those fierce and lawless wanderers who scorn the yoke of Sultan or Pasha, and are to all intents and purposes their own masters.

I have gone some way, perhaps, towards explaining that idiosyncrasy which causes me to experience so much delight in the desert. It is, besides, invested with all those attributes of grandeur which can recommend it to the imagination, with its surface eternally in motion, its sand-storms, its gyrating and moving columns reaching to the clouds, its hurricanes, its poisonous winds, its scattered and isolated spots of verdure, its flocks of gazelles, its flights of strange birds, its mirage, its Bedouin-tents, beheld to-day on the verge of the horizon, to-morrow invisible, like the summits of a city which has been swallowed up by the earth. Add to all this the feeling that your hand is here against every man, and every man's hand against you; that you sleep on your poignard, your pistol and your rifle; and that if you have won for your-

self the smiles of some beauty, you have here the chivalrous office of guarding her against various forms of danger and death. Who, then, would not covet such an existence, and love that wild and desolate portion of the earth's surface on which alone in this world you can possibly taste it?

XXVII.

The reader probably remembers that Eastern story, in which a man puts his head in a tub of water and draws it out again, but by some magic influence is made to pass in that instant of time through a series of events and circumstances almost sufficient to fill up the longest life. Something analogous happened to me in the desert. We had been riding all day, and were getting, late in the afternoon, extremely hungry. I therefore desired Mohammed to halt, that we might alight and refresh ourselves in the shade of some pleasant sand-hills, scattered thickly over this part of the waste. When we had satisfied our hunger, the camels were let loose to browse under the careful eye of their owner, while we sat down to enjoy a moment's rest. I went to the sloping mound at a little distance, and throwing myself on the sand was soon asleep.

What combination of ideas generated the scene which now passed before me, I know not, but methought I was sitting in some pleasant place with a woman by my side. A holy tie united us, and we were all in all to each other. I looked into her

face, and all the beauty of the world seemed to be concentrated there. Her eyes, brighter than the stars, reflected outwards upon me the boundless love that lay hidden in her soul, and I was as happy as a seraph.

Many years seemed to elapse, and I looked again, and behold the same face was there, a little changed, perhaps, but not deteriorated. Clustering around it was a circle of little faces, each of which seemed to reflect its beauty in a particular way.

Many years passed once more, and I looked again. The face was still there, but considerably changed and faded. The little faces had now risen to its own level, and its beauty had been transferred to them. Nevertheless, as they regarded it, it was lighted up by looks of unutterable love, which imparted to it a grandeur and a charm beyond that of beauty, and I heard the word "Mother" murmur through the air from many lips at once, and a light from heaven seemed to descend upon the place and render it luminous.

Years and years passed: I looked again. The face was still there, but I was alone with it, and an air of pensiveness and sadness hung around it like a cloud. It was clear that time and many sorrows had passed over it. But it was still beautiful. My own eyes, however, as I gazed upon the change, grew dim, and deep sighs broke from me, when I beheld the fading of the brightest of the works of God.

A long interval passed and I looked again; the face was still there, but oh, how changed! A mask of wrinkles concealed from me all I had formerly admired; the eyes were dull and sunken, the cheeks pale, the skin withered. But, as I continued to gaze, my eye began to discern behind the covering of wrinkles a face more beautiful than any I had yet looked upon. All the concentrated love of sixty years seemed to be moulded into angelic features—truth, constancy, the holy affections of the mother and the wife, a placid recollection of the past, a bright hope of the future. A few white hairs floated round the forehead of the wrinkled face; but about the head of the inner woman there clustered, as of old, a profusion of golden ringlets, and the blue of the underlying eyes was richer and more celestial than on the day which had first seen her mine.

Time passed, and I looked again. The face was not there, but instead, a skeleton. I looked upon it, however, without horror. I knew it was the skeleton of her I loved. I held it, therefore, in my embrace, and gazed upon it with a fixed and unfaltering gaze. As I did so, a light gathered round it, and gradually moulded itself into the features I had seen at the first, only more bright, more beautiful, more seraphic in their expression. The face smiled on me as it had always smiled; and as it did so, a pair of snowy wings shot forth and folded me round. The eyes were turned

upwards, the smile grew every instant more divine, I felt my feet lose their hold of the earth—the wings pressed more closely around me, and together we mounted through the ether, our souls melting, as we did so, into one. Presently we were absorbed in overpowering brightness. I lost all consciousness—I awoke with a start, and found Vere still sleeping, and Mohammed quietly watching the camels as before.

XXVIII.

And did my friends the Bedouins attack me in my passage across their desert? Far from it. We moved on as quietly as through the streets of Cairo; but some hours before our arrival in the Arsinoëtic nome, an Osmanli, who represented himself as Governor of Medinet-el-fayum, informed us that the Mograbins were in rebellion, that a body of five thousand horse was encamped on the shores of Lake Mœris, and that two days before a bloody battle had been fought midway between the lake and the capital, in which the troops of the Government had been utterly routed and put to flight.

Here, then, the predictions of the hieroglyphical sages were about to be fulfilled. But there was still time for escape. By turning back and riding all night we might easily before morning reach the valley. But we had come thus far partly for the

purpose of seeing Lake Mœris, partly that we might wander through the olive-groves and rose-gardens of the Fayúm, and visit an encampment of Western Bedouins, and climb the Pyramid of the Labyrinth, and follow the course of the mighty canal, excavated in remote antiquity by the Egyptian kings, to convey the waters of the Nile into that immense basin, natural or artificial, which, extending for more than fifty miles between this beautiful oasis and the desert, at once imparts to it splendour and fertility.

It being useless, therefore, to listen to the dictates of prudence, we pushed on, and before sunset,—the Turkish governor still accompanying us,—arrived at Tameia, where we took leave of him, and I believe he effected his escape.

We found the town in possession of the rebel Mograbins, and two of their horsemen, spear in hand, mounting guard at the door of the caravanserai. Between these gentlemen we passed on, our Mahazi chief muttering to me as we did so, that it was all over with us. He scorned to lament his own fate, but he burst forth into unsophisticated lamentations at the loss of his camels. Vere, who had always something comfortable to say on such occasions, gave me a knowing look, as we alighted from our dromedaries, and said drolly, in his provincial dialect,—

"I say, old fellow, we have putt our futt in it! These thievish friends of yours,"—he always com-

plimented me by applying this name to the Bedouins, —"will certainly walk into our goods and chattels, and if we don't get our throats cut this blessed night, we shall return to the valley to-morrow as naked as robins."

Laughing heartily at this sally, I gave Mohammed and Abou-Zaid directions about the supper, after which we went forth, the Mograbins not preventing us, to see the town, with its vast sluices and water-works, and to catch, if possible, a glimpse of Lake Mœris. The inhabitants, freed from the restraints of authority, were impudent, but by no means insolent or brutal. They followed us in crowds, and laughed at us a great deal, which was perfectly natural, as we no doubt cut a comical figure in their eyes; Vere, with his red beard and straw hat, and I with my anomalous costume, half Frank, half Turkish; for I sometimes wore one sort of dress, sometimes another. Had these people been the ferocious marauders they are generally supposed to be, why did they not knock us on the head at once? There was nothing to hinder them. The Pasha's authority was for the time completely at an end, and at no future period, whatever might turn up, would it have been practicable for the Egyptian government to pursue and punish our murderers. If they spared us, therefore, it was because they acted under the influence of those principles of justice which in all countries sway the conduct of the majority.

In an artistic point of view, it would be much better for me to enhance the danger we ran, by representing the Mograbins as the most truculent and destructive banditti on the face of the habitable globe; I might draw an exciting picture of the offensive conduct of the mob, broke loose from the restraints of law; might indulge in a dissertation on the value of strong governments, and express my servile gratitude to Mohammed Ali for the protection he elsewhere extended to travellers. But the mob, in fact, though lawless, were not at all ferocious. Impertinent, I might, perhaps, call them, because they bothered us a good deal to let them fire out of our rifles and pistols. Whatever they intended, however, we disarmed them completely, by putting our weapons into their hands, and showing them how they ought to be used. In a short time, therefore, they became as gentle and tractable as other Arabs, and a great deal merrier; delighted, I suppose, at even the most transient enjoyment of freedom.

In the outskirts of the town we found an old sheik's tomb, with a narrow flight of steps leading to its summit. This we mounted without ceremony, not in the least scrupling to place our Frankish boots on the top of their sacred monument. Amused by our audacity, they only laughed at us. I forgot them, however, for a moment, when I caught the first glimpse of the lake, heaving, glittering, and quivering in the crimson light of

evening. Doubtless the earth borrows half its loveliness from us, from our memories, from our feelings, from our anticipations. Lake Mœris had been to me, through the greater part of my life, a fabulous lake, exactly like those waters described in the "Arabian Nights," abounding with blue fishes, and dragged by the nets of fishermen, who bring up from time to time huge brazen bottles, containing imprisoned Effrits, or Marids. It had now emerged from the region of myths and fables into the category of real existences. It affected my mind, therefore, like a new creation. I appeared to be looking back through the vista of a thousand generations, and to behold the godlike form of Isis floating in mists over the illuminated waves.

Fortunately it was impossible from the saint's tomb to behold the whole extent of those marvellous waters, which seemed to stretch away beneath the setting sun interminably towards the west, winding, spreading, glowing with light, and bearing the barks which ventered on them to lands of promise, beneath still brighter skies, if, in truth, the universe contain any deserving to be so considered.

What I felt at that moment was a tribute to the power of literature. It was the genius of Herodotus that had invested that dreamy lake with so much beauty and fascination for me. He had visited it when Egypt was in its glory, when two vast Pyramids, with sacred statues on their summits,

towered three hundred feet above those waves, and glowed every evening in the setting sun: and now, what did I see? A thousand black tents filled with the horsemen of the desert, extending further than the eye could reach along its shores. These, at all events, were genuine, and perhaps their presence, without our being conscious of it at the moment, very greatly augmented the grandeur of the landscape.

XXIX.

On our return to the caravanserai, I confess,—having no desire to pass either for a stoic or a hero —that I experienced no slight degree of apprehension; the guard at the great door had been increased, and appeared to look at us as we entered as a panther might be supposed to look at a couple of unresisting animals, entering accidentally into its den. The Mahazi chief gave us a low and sad greeting, and Abou-Zaid was so disordered by terror, that he had scarcely strength left to get through his customary avocations.

But I suppose the belief in destiny is more or less diffused through the atmosphere of the East, and that people of all creeds, when in danger or difficulty, mutter to themselves, "God is great!" and sit down to supper or breakfast more comfortable from the conviction. This was what, at any rate, we did: and then, after the customary

pipe, lay down in a room without a door, to sleep. Accustomed to the surprises and contests of the desert, the Mahazi sheikh threw himself on a sack across the entrance, as if determined that the midnight slaughter, if it took place at all, should commence with him. He apparently regarded us in the light of his guests, and I am thoroughly persuaded would have fought like a lion in our defence.

I ought, perhaps, by way of explanation, to add that he was sixty-four years of age, though so vigorous and active, so upright and healthy, that he would have been taken at the utmost for forty. Few young men could have kept pace with him in running, or bounded into the saddle with so much ease and alacrity. Frequently, when anything was wanted, he sprang from the dromedary's back, a height of nine or ten feet, to the sand, and afterwards climbed the animal's bunch, as a cat climbs an apple-tree.

That he had been engaged in desperate conflicts was visible from his face, which was covered with scars. One fearful seam, at least three inches long, passed obliquely from his temple to his cheek, which had evidently been laid perfectly open by a sabre. But these were not the scars of a robber; they had been received in defence of his tents and household gods, of his children and his women,—that is to say, of whatever the Arab holds dearest in life.

I conversed often and much with this son of the desert, who appeared to me the gentlest and most generous of human beings, and during our intercourse, he gained so much on my best feelings that I can truly say I began to regard him as a brother. It is one of the evils of travelling, that if it forms friendships, it breaks them too. I may of course be wrong in my estimate of Mohammed, but my belief is, that few nobler or more generous men ever trod the sands of the Arabian desert.

His attachment to me was something almost unintelligible. When I awoke, I often found that he had been sitting beside me and watching me in my sleep; he anticipated my wishes; he taxed his ingenuity to discover the means of amusing or obliging me; his voice assumed a tone of unusual kindness when we spoke together, and first and last he absolutely refused to accept from me the slightest reward. What we paid him for his camels he of course took, as a mere matter of business, but beyond this, he exhibited the most entire disregard for money; he never spoke of it, never alluded to it, and could I have accompanied him to his encampment with all my family, I should have been welcome to his tents had my visit been protracted to a hundred years.

Should I ever return to Egypt, my principal pleasure would be to search out that noble sheikh of the Mahazi, every one of whose sentiments and feelings was honourable to human nature. And

what would I not give to convey this tribute to his merit to his hospitable tent, to have it read aloud to his children, to have it engraved on the memory of his tribe, to let it be recollected for ever among them that their patriarchal ruler—for he was a sort of prince in his way—knew how to inspire in men of another creed the most unbounded admiration for his virtues and his friendship.

Vere had imbibed on his arrival in Egypt the prejudices current among most Franks there against the Arabs, and because he looked upon their religion as an imposture, inferred they must necessarily be insincere, which experience all the world over proves to be bad logic. Above all things, he refused to put faith in their abstinence from wine, and insisted that they would eagerly drink it, if disguised under another name. In this persuasion he one evening offered our friendly sheikh a glass of Schiedam. Mohammed appealed to me, and said:—

"You are better acquainted than I with the precepts of the Book: is it forbidden?"

"Literally," I replied, "it could not be forbidden, because it had not been invented in the age of the Prophet."

"But if it had been then known," he asked, "would it have been prohibited?"

I replied in the affirmative.

"Then," observed he, addressing himself to Vere, "I would rather not taste it. Until now I

have kept a clear conscience on these matters, and it is better, perhaps, to be too abstinent than too indulgent."

XXX.

The poor man sings, they say, in the midst of thieves, and the weary man sleeps under the same circumstances; at any rate, I did in the caravanserai at Tameia, and my repose was not disturbed. Our throats and even our baggage and camels were in exactly the same state as when we lay down to rest. Just at the first break of dawn, Mohammed roused us, saying it was full time to resume our journey. This we did with as great speed as possible, addressing, as we issued through the archway, the salutation of peace to the Mograbin spearmen, who returned it in the same tone and spirit.

We were now in our own minds quite reconciled to the rebels, who indeed possessed my warmest sympathy from the first. A fresh guide accompanied us, partly to direct our course, but partly also to explain to any detached band of Mograbins we might encounter, the inoffensive nature of our pursuits. At the village of Senuris, another guide attached himself to us, and this young man, an extremely fine specimen of the Arab race, had that day the honour, and, I believe, the pleasure of saving our lives. But of this in its proper place.

Not exactly foreseeing what sort of risks we

were running, on we went with our dromedaries through one of the richest and most luxuriant countries in the world. I never saw a landscape that inspired me with greater admiration. Here and there were streams and water-courses, and pebbly brooks, and freshes, with reeds and long grass, and ponds and lakelets, surrounded by groves or copses, or terminating in sweeps of rushes, waving and rustling in the breeze. On one side lay meadows of Egyptian clover, drenched heavily by the night-dews; on the other, fields of young corn of the freshest and brightest green, descending by a gentle slope towards the water.

At length, we came opposite the protracted line of black tents, in front of which large bodies of fierce horsemen rode restlessly to and fro, their long spears and drawn scimetars flashing in the sun. Of course we felt completely at the mercy of these gentlemen, who observed us without appearing to do so.

In the course of the morning we struck into a road leading across the fields to the right, and met as we advanced numerous strings of asses laden with fish to be sold among the populations of the neighbouring villages. On reaching the edge of the cultivated country, Vere and I alighted, and leaving our beasts and attendants, proceeded together through thickets of tamarisk and copses of odoriferous bushes towards the sea of Mœris. We soon lost sight of everything living, and

approached in silent pleasure this mighty work of the old Egyptians. Whoever has seen the Leman Lake, extending from Geneva to Villeneuve, a little above which the Rhone rushes into it from between the Alps of the Vallée, may form a tolerably accurate idea of the dimensions of this inland sea, fifty-two miles in length, by nine or ten in breadth; but the Lake of Geneva, surrounded by cultivation, its shores studded with towns, or overhung by the Alps, looks tame and domesticated. Lake Mœris bears the impress in all its features of that savage desert of Libya, which more than half encompasses it. On a portion of what may be called the Egyptian shore thin and scattered evidences of fertility advance almost to its margin. Everywhere else you have the barren rocks split and calcined by the sun; or downs of that billowy, golden sand, which, piled into ridges or diffused into shining levels, descends glittering into the water, blue, at times, as the overhanging sky.

But everything in this strange prospect is not romantic. For thirty or forty yards from the edge of the water, the sand presented a diminutive representation of Pharaoh's host, after it had been disgorged by the Red Sea. Immense multitudes of fishes of all dimensions, from the size of the dolphin to that of the perch, lay scattered about dead, and decomposing with fearful rapidity in the sun. The stench seemed sufficiently noisome to breed a pestilence, so that even now at this

distance of time, my gorge, to use Hamlet's phrase, rises at it. Notwithstanding this unsavoury odour, Vere undressed and bathed, while I walked to and fro like a magician among the dead fishes, as if endeavouring to recal them to life.

On returning and mounting our camels, we observed a small party of horsemen, armed with spears and muskets, detach itself from the main body, and gallop forward with threatening gestures to cut off our retreat. Vere adjusted the pistols in his girdle, and examined his rifle to see if all was right. The Mahazi chief rode up to me, his eyes flashing, and his whole countenance lighted up with the joy of strife, and observed, that if attacked, he would certainly kill some of those dogs of Mograbins before we were overpowered and put to death; but the young man from Senuris, whose name, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten, displayed more prudence than any of us, and said he would go and parley with the Bedouins, who might possibly by this means be induced to let us escape.

While this portentous conference was going on, it would be extreme affectation in me to say that I did not feel inexpressibly uncomfortable. To get one of those glittering spears through my breast, or an ounce of lead from two or three muskets at once, was a prospect not to be regarded with indifference. Vere's habit of jesting forsook him quite, though his phraseology continued much the same.

"Matters are beginning to look rather ugly,"

said he; "but don't you think, if we see them coming on, we had better cock our rifles, take the shine out of some of them, and then cut and run; they can but bottle us after all?"

I told him the Mahazi sheikh had just been making the same remark, though in less classical language, and it would be as well to kill as many as we could, if really attacked.

The place of conference was a little to the left, at first considerably in front of us, but as it was thought prudent not to halt, we had very soon left it in our rear. Our eyes, nevertheless, were constantly fixed upon the spot, and at length we had the satisfaction to see the horsemen ride off, and our Senuris guide come running towards us.

He said, briefly, it was all right for the present, that the attack intended to be made on us was under the suspicion of our being emissaries in the service of the Pasha, but that he had laughed this idea to scorn, and asked them, if they had ever known Englishmen to act as spies.

To this they replied in the negative, upon which he affirmed that the English only travelled to observe what people ate and drank, and to learn what was good that they might introduce it into their own country. In that case, the horsemen said, we might go in peace; "but, as when they return to the camp they may not find their chief of the same mind, you had better push on," said he, "with all practicable haste, so as to reach Medinet before nightfall."

We immediately put our dromedaries to their utmost speed, and faint as we were from hunger, passed through town after town, and village after village. At length towards evening our friend from Senuris quitted us and returned to his village, where, I trust, he often relates to his wife and children how in former days, when he was a young man, he saved certain unbelievers from the spears of the Mograbins, and how, as a true disciple of El-Islam, he refused all reward on that account, contenting himself with the sum promised him for acting as guide to the Lake.

As night came on, we began to enter the extensive olive-groves which appeared to cover all that portion of the province. We met numerous small parties making the best of their way home, as they said it was extremely dangerous to be found out after dark. But our advance was impeded by the extraordinary nature of the ground: sometimes our road lay through dusky woods, where we could not see even the heads of our dromedaries; we would then, perhaps, immerge on a narrow causeway running between two deep and broad canals.

Occasionally we had to climb considerable hillocks or mounds, and then to crawl over narrow pathways running along the precipitous banks of watercourses, where the least slip of the foot would have sent us down headlong, camels and all, into unknown depths. Here and there vast volumes of water were heard rushing through sluices, or falling

down precipices with a deafening and perplexing noise, mingling with which, we once or twice thought we could detect the deep howl of the wolf, or the long melancholy cry of the jackal.

As the hours wore on, we began sadly to fear we should not reach Medinet before the closing of the gates, and consequently have to pass the night in the fields, afraid to kindle a fire lest we might thus attract some straggling party of Mograbins sufficiently audacious to approach the walls of the capital.

It was with extreme pleasure, therefore, that we at length heard the voice of the Muezzin calling to evening prayer. As soon as he had concluded, we knew the gates would be closed, so we violently urged forward our jaded animals, whose instincts strongly assisted us, as they appeared to know quite as well as we did they were to rest and get their supper at Medinet. We fortunately arrived at the very critical moment, for the porters were in the act of closing the city gate, when camel after camel dashed through, my white beauty, whom we had denominated Cleopatra, leading the way.

XXXI.

When we reached the caravanserai, and had alighted, it was with extreme difficulty we could ascend the long flight of steps leading to the upper chambers, which are by far the pleasantest in hot weather. Our baggage was carried up by the

attendants, and as soon as my mattress was unrolled, I threw myself upon it in a state of exhaustion not to be described, for we had ridden fifty-five miles that day, and walked a great deal besides.

Here the principal attendants were women, and one of these, a fine, fat, good-natured girl, took our pipes and filled and lighted them, and invited us to smoke while supper was getting ready, observing that it would greatly refresh us. Poor Vere was so thoroughly done up, that he would pay no attention to her, but, turning on his face, lay there in a state almost of stupor. I bade the obliging Ghawazi smoke it herself, which she declined, saying it would be much better for her to assist in making our coffee.

She then disappeared, and returning in a few minutes, presented me with a small bowl of sherbet, which I thought the most delicious I had ever tasted. I wished Vere to share it with me, but found him asleep. For some time I could not stir, and poor Abou-Zaid lay helpless as a log on a portion of the camel furniture out upon the open terrace. The Mahazi chief, more accustomed to rough and violent exercise, was able at once to attend to his camels, while the dancing girls undertook the preparation of supper.

There is a philosophy in smoking which it transcends my power to explain. Here, in Europe, if, when hungry and exhausted, I were to venture

on a cigar, it would act like ipecacuanha; but in the East, the Gebeli produced invariably a different effect.

On the present occasion, it so refreshed and invigorated me, that I was soon able to sit upright and enjoy my supper. Vere, who had not had recourse to this restorative, appeared to be threatened with fever, and scarcely recovered during the whole evening. Mohammed, when his dromedaries had been attended to, joined us, and he and I, at least, ate like Trojans. Abou-Zaid was still more overcome than Vere, and after taking a little bread and coffee, went off to sleep.

I know not how the case may be with others, but when I am extremely fatigued, the god of dreams is always very shy of coming near me. When all was still, therefore, I arose and walked on the terrace, where I discovered a small flight of steps leading to the roof of the chambers. Here I found a number of the guests of the caravanserai, who, as the night was exceedingly hot, had retired thither with their women to sleep. Whether they thought me an intruder or not is more than I can say, but passing group after group I at length reached a clear space, and sat down by the low parapet which ran along the outer wall to look forth upon the country.

The moon had now risen, and by its light I contemplated the features of the Arsinoetic nome swelling into hills, and gleaming here and there

with artificial expanses of water, alternately displayed and concealed by the massive shadows of the woods. At intervals, on the verge of the horizon towards the west, I saw what I supposed to be the camp-fires of the insurgents, and nearer at hand smaller lights in the villages, where the inhabitants were probably keeping watch to guard against surprise. Having remained here some time, a pleasant drowsiness came on, and picking my way among the sleepers, stepping over some, and coasting round the heads or feet of others, I retreated to my dormitory, where I was soon asleep.

XXXII.

Rising early is so universal a habit in warm climates, that no one thinks of acting otherwise. Though so much fatigued over night, therefore, we were again stirring with the dawn, being fully resolved to sleep the following night at Benisooef. All this part of the Fayúm is laid out in gardens, where roses are cultivated for the purpose of making attar. Rose-water, also, is manufactured in immense quantities, though the consumption in Egypt is not so great as formerly under the rule of the Memluk Beys. Still the opulent and luxurious often bathe in rose-water, and fill with it the glass vases of their pipes. At the proper season of the year, all the undulating country about Medinet must look like a parterre, and be literally fragrant with roses, which, stretching like a carpet between

the dark foliage of the olive groves, present the most delightful contrast to the eye.

On quitting the city, we turned our faces towards the east, and rode for several hours along the banks of the great canal through which the waters of the Nile are poured into Lake Mœris. That we breakfasted some time in the course of the morning, our usual habits will not suffer me to doubt, but though I can remember every other incident, small or great, which occurred during my stay in Egypt, I am perfectly oblivious respecting the doings of that morning. That we rode fast and talked little, I recollect perfectly, but that is all. I suppose extreme weariness is unfavourable to memory, and I can distinctly call to mind that when we arose at Medinet, I should have liked to remain rolled up snug in my bed three or four hours longer. But we were as so many slaves to our plans, and had determined on the preceding day to reach the Nile before the following night.

Everybody has heard of the Arab proverb, "Whosoever drinketh of the water of this river, will afterwards long for it all his life." For others I cannot speak, but it is pre-eminently true in my own case. Its banks, studded with palm-trees, often present themselves to me in dreams: I hear its delightful murmur in my sleep, and reminiscences of the pleasure I tasted there always reckon largely in the general stock of my enjoyments.

This, it is well known, was the case of old with

the daughters and sisters of the Ptolemies, who, when married to princes at a distance, were careful to have the water of the dear old river brought to them, wherever they were, so that they might never drink of any other. This, the romantic feeling of Hellenic princesses, made them fancy themselves always at home, for when they raised the crystal goblet, filled from the Nile, to their lips, it no doubt brought along with it visions of the beautiful land in which they had first beheld the sun and heard the music of the Greek language.

In returning from the Fayúm, I was so eager to be once more on the river, that this feeling interfered seriously with the amusements of the day, especially as Vere shared it. To render our preference more intelligible, I must confess that the waters of the Fayúm are all brackish, the desert in that part being impregnated with salt. Properly speaking, therefore, we could never quench our thirst, being always obliged to pour Schiedam into our glasses before we could swallow their contents. Once, certainly, we cut a most ludicrous figure: when crossing a narrow bridge over the canal, out of which Mohammed descended to draw a little water, we remained aloft on our dromedaries; I held a large cup or bowl, while Vere, with a square bottle of Hollands cased with tin, poured into it the Dutch nectar, which scarcely succeeded in rendering the water palatable.

XXXIII.

In the course of the day we turned a little towards the south, to visit a Bedouin encampment on the skirts of the cultivated country. What may have been the feelings of the inmates, it is not of course in my power to tell, but to my fancy they presented with their dwellings one of the most charming pictures I have ever beheld. Imagine a small verdant plain running southward, and terminating in the sands of the desert, which approached it in tiny waves like those of the sea in summer.

In the midst of this grassy level, a line of black tents forming a spacious crescent faced the east, and enclosed within its horns what may not improperly be called the village-green: the tents, large and roomy, were open in front, and we observed hundreds of pretty mammas sitting under the projecting canopy, knitting, sewing, or chatting, while their children, in great numbers, gambolled before them on the grass. Their husbands, sons, and brothers, were away in the desert, with their horses, sheep, and camels, while two or three old men remained nominally to protect the encampment, though there was, probably, so near the Valley very little danger to be apprehended.

We halted on the north wing of the crescent,

that I might form some idea of the existence I had once traced out for myself, and I can conceive that it would have been most happy. The women, young and old, were all unveiled, and seemed neither to court nor shun the gaze of strangers. Several came out to look at us, and I remember one in particular, with a baby at her breast and two very little children clinging to her skirts, who would have been called extremely beautiful in Europe. Swarthy no doubt she was, but her regular features, her large black eyes, her lofty forehead, shaded by a profusion of dark tresses, suggested to me the idea of a Greek woman in the heroic ages.

Freedom everywhere ennobles the mind, and impresses an openness and grandeur on the countenance. In Egypt, the women, however pretty, are so timid as to be almost sheepish. They appear to you afraid of all the world, not so much through modesty as through sheer apprehension.

The Bedouin girls, on the contrary, seem to fear nothing, and the expression of their faces gives you distinctly to understand that they are able to defend themselves against any one. I never saw an immodest woman in the desert; their manners are free, easy, graceful, and would be thought to indicate a high degree of civilization, if it were not evident that they are inspired by unsophisticated nature.

XXXIV.

I remember near the Pyramid of Dashur overtaking a Bedouin girl very early one morning among the sands. She was proceeding in the same direction as ourselves, observing which, I asked her if she would like to mount the camel, and ride before me. She replied, she was perfectly able to walk, but at the same time thanked me for the offer.

I inquired what she did alone in the desert, and she informed me that it was her practice to collect coins and small antiquities, which were sold to travellers or disposed of at Cairo. She went on to explain how many hours she thus spent, and what she usually earned in a week by this curious occupation. Though her gains were extremely small, she did not give me the idea of being poor. Her form was vigorous and robust, and she was plump and extremely pretty, though her good looks were not much set off by her costume, as she wore nothing but the ordinary shift, and a small square handkerchief of the same colour thrown carelessly over the head.

Yet she appeared to have much more knowledge and education than a woman of the middle classes among the Egyptians; she could talk well, her ideas were clear, and her notions enlarged and sensible. We spoke of her tribe, of the situation

of her friends, and she informed us that they had been reduced almost to misery by the villanous government of the Pasha, whom she described as an unprincipled adventurer, elevated by destiny to effect some special purpose. The Bedouins, she said, detested him, and there were many men of her tribe who desired nothing better than to send their spears through him. Her eyes flashed and her whole countenance seemed lighted up as she spoke on this subject, but we soon changed the conversation, and talked of things more germane to her condition.

Vere had a prejudice against the Arabs, Bedouins and all, and somehow contrived to let them feel it. My young friend, therefore, who told us her name was Ayesha, immediately displayed her repugnance for him, and would scarcely answer when he asked her a question.

When in about an hour and a half we arrived at the Pyramid of Sakkarah, it was found there the wind had choked up the entrance with sand, which we had to clear away with considerable labour before we could get in. I invited Ayesha to enter with us, but she declined, observing, there were Effrits in the Pyramid which might take it into their heads to kill and devour her.

"But you don't mind," said I, "their killing and devouring me."

"Oh! they know better," answered she, laughing, "than to touch infidels; and besides, it is your own fault. Why can't you sit out here comfortably

on the sand, and let that giant of a friend of yours go in with the Arabs?"

I replied, that I had come all the way from the countries of Frankestan to see these things.

"Very well," she said, "you can go in and I will stay out here and take care of your clothes;" for the interior of the Pyramids being extremely hot, it is necessary to undress partly before entering. Vere's garments were thrown in one pile on the sand, and mine in another. While we were in the Pyramid, a heavy shower of rain came on, by which Vere's coat, &c. were thoroughly drenched; but Ayesha had sat on mine, and spread her chemise over them, and got completely wet in keeping my clothes dry and comfortable for me to put on when I came out.

We have often a very false way of viewing little proceedings of this sort. I did not exactly imagine that she had done this expressly for gain, but I still thought it would be pleasant to her to receive a few piastres for her pains. I, therefore, took out my purse and offered to reward her, but she told me she had done it for her own pleasure, and would take nothing.

"At least, Ayesha," said I, "you must breakfast with us;" to which she very readily consented. When Abou-Zaid had prepared the coffee and spread our tablecloth on the sand, she presided over our breakfast as if she had been doing the honours of a house in England, or of her father's tent in the desert.

Let no reader imagine that in acting thus Ayesha departed in the least degree from the respect due to herself as a modest girl. Though breakfasting with us and forming a portion of our circle, she sat in some sort apart, and caused it to be distinctly understood by her whole manner, that she required to be treated as the daughter of a Bedouin. There was not the slightest tincture of impudence in her conversation or behaviour, her language was in the highest degree decorous, and, as far as my knowledge would enable me to judge, elegant. It would have been impossible for an Egyptian woman to conduct herself with so much propriety, since, without being conscious of it, she would inevitably have made use of coarse expressions utterly unfit for female lips.

When we had eaten and drank sufficiently, we proceeded towards the bird-mummy-pits, Ayesha still accompanying us. On the way, we met several girls of the same tribe, who were out on a similar errand with herself, and they all joined the cortège of the unbelievers, until we came to the descent into the catacombs, where they remained. On our return from the subterranean world, evening was coming on, and the girls rose to depart, observing they had a long way to walk. We said they should not carry away with them to their tents the idea that we were ignorant altogether of the laws of hospitality, so as our attendants had prepared supper, we made them share it, after which we

presented each of them with a few piastres, and they set out, wishing us all sorts of success and happiness in this world and the next.

XXXV.

When we quitted the Bedouin encampment, the recollection of which has betrayed me into this digression, we visited the site of the Labyrinth, to which we were directed by a dilapidated brick Pyramid. At the southern foot of this structure, I experienced the greatest heat in which I think it possible to breathe. We had alighted from the dromedaries and left them browsing on the prickly plants found there in great abundance; and in making our way towards the temple of Athor, had to traverse a deep round basin, which may once have formed the bed of a small lake.

As we descended into this, it was like entering a reservoir filled with hot water: the air was so glowing, that it seemed almost to take away our breath in moving through it. The perspiration came out upon my forehead like beads. I felt an indescribable languor and a sort of swimming of the head, as when a fainting fit is coming on; but without much minding what our sensations were, we dashed on, and then, in the midst of the scorching heat, climbed the Pyramid, from the summit of which we enjoyed a magnificent prospect, and a deliciously cooling breeze.

If the Labyrinth really stood in the large quad-

rangular enclosure to the south-east of this Pyramid, and filled it entirely, it must have been a splendid edifice; but there are no remains which prove this to be the spot. On the contrary, as we find no traces of subterranean apartments, I think it reasonable to conclude, that the ruins of the Labyrinth must be sought for elsewhere.

Philosophers might possibly be able to explain why two men apparently under the same influences should yet feel so differently as Vere and I often did. On this occasion, however, our feelings seemed to be much about the same. All the afternoon we cast longing eyes towards the east, eagerly desiring to behold the palm-groves of the Nilotic valley; for the country we traversed was bare and parched, reflecting the fierce rays of the sun, and giving me a full conception of what it is to travel through the desert in hot weather.

Just before we reached the valley, our way led us near some ponds of stagnant water standing in the midst of stunted bushes, where I witnessed a phenomenon, familiar, I believe, to naturalists, but perfectly new to me: as we moved along, we observed millions of winged ants rising from the ground, and settling in clouds on us and our dromedaries, so that we appeared to each other to be invested with a swarm of diminutive bees. They tried to get into our mouths, into our ears and eyes, crawl down our necks, up our wrists, and made themselves intensely disagreeable. Still we could

not possibly desist from laughing at one another, moving like ant-hills through the air. It was in vain that we struck them off with our koorbashes, killing thousands and tens of thousands at every stroke; the little villains were not to be discouraged, being no doubt resolved to afford us a practical idea of what Moses meant by the plague of flies. We gave up the contest, and let them crawl about and sting as much as they pleased.

When we arrived at the caravanserai of Benisooef we had our revenge, for a good-natured Ghawazi, who happened to be there, took up a sort of birch-broom, and swept them off as you might sweep a drift of snow from a buffalo. Will the reader, however, pardon me if I add, that the dancing-girl's broom could not sweep away the stench caused by the blood of these little monsters, with which our clothes were completely saturated. I fancy I can smell it now—the most offensive and loathsome odour I ever encountered, except in the crocodile-mummy-pits, where all the concentrated fumes of Gehenam appeared to be stirred up for the torture of those travellers who happen to have noses.

XXXVI.

Behold us, then, at Benisooef, making ourselves comfortable in the interior court of an immense caravanserai, with a large handsome fountain sending about its splashing waters in the centre. Most

of the rooms above and below were occupied by soldiers, travellers, fakirs, dancing-girls, and vagabonds of all sorts, so that we were compelled to content ourselves with a room near the gateway, one of the least commodious in the buildings. The military gentlemen formed part of a body then collecting at Benisooef to march under the command of Ahmed Pasha against the Mograbin rebels in the Fayúm; and a strange and ill-assorted rabble they were,—Albanians, Turks, renegade Franks, and a few Bedouins, expelled in all likelihood for malpractices from their own tribes in the desert.

Still, wild and lawless as they were, they behaved with extreme civility to us. A more debauched set of libertines, however, it would be difficult to picture to oneself. All the precepts of the Koran were probably broken by them that night. As great numbers expected to be killed in less than a week, they seemed resolved to make the most of the interval by plunging up to their eyes in every kind of vice. In defiance of the Prophet, they drank incessantly, sang obscene songs, and more than once made us wish they had had to encounter the Mograbins a week before. The poor Ghawazi were literally frightened and made their escape from them, so atrocious were their manners. Nay, our camels sought during the night to express their disgust by getting up out of the court and walking into our room. I was

in fact awakened by Cleopatra putting her foot softly on my stomach and reaching her long neck over my head to get at some bags of beans that were standing there open against the wall. I speedily put her ladyship to flight, and her retreat was hailed by a general chorus of imprecations from Vere, Mohammed, and Abou-Zaid, over whom, in making her exit, she trod rather roughly.

All further attempts at sleep, at least for me, were now unavailing, so I got up, filled my pipe, and sat on a step in the court to enjoy the cool air alone. The rascally soldiers had most of them fallen asleep, though a few still muttered and swore aloft in the terrace, over which I wonder they did not roll into the court and break their necks. The camels are very industrious eaters, and so are the asses, but both species, having got their fill of food, were trying to take a nap to prepare them for the fatigue of the morning. By degrees, therefore, I had, in some sort, the whole place to myself. I went on smoking pipe after pipe until the sound of the splashing waters and the narcotic qualities of the Gebeli, brought me what I could not enjoy in bed, a short but most delicious sleep.

On awaking soon after day, I observed a trait of Eastern manners which I have never been able to explain to myself. A woman, dressed like a lady, was reclining on some half-empty sacks beside a man in the garb of a Fellah. They were both fast asleep, but awaking shortly after, the

great gate of the caravanserai was opened, and she slipped out. The Fellah acted as porter, but when I questioned him about his companion, he affected to be perfectly ignorant, and said he supposed I had seen a Jinneyeh. When I mentioned the subject to Mohammed, he observed, she was no doubt the wife of some Turk, who, having escaped from the Harim, spent her nights thus in low intrigue.

I shall not now pause to relate the incidents of our return to Cairo, our visit to the Haram-el-Kedab, our adventures in the Pyramid of Sakkarah, or our hospitable reception among the cultivators of the valley. The reader will be kind enough to imagine all these things for himself. I must now make a transition to another part of my narrative.

PART THE THIRD.

I.

TRAVELLING seems, in many respects, the image of life. No sooner have you attained one point, than you immediately desire to quit it and press on towards another. Though anxious, however, to behold the wonders of the Upper Nile, and extremely pleased, besides, with motion and change, I could not leave Cairo without regret, since in the short time I had been in it I had made several friends, and spent many happy hours. Still, as I have said, it is pleasant to be in motion, and, therefore, when Suliman came to inform me that our boat was ready and everything necessary for the voyage on board, I mounted my donkey with alacrity, and rode down eagerly to Boulac, where we were to embark.

Though Vere and I had agreed to travel together, we determined to be independent, and for this reason to have a boat apiece. We also took each of us an interpreter and a crew of six or seven

Arabs, who, equally with ourselves rejoiced to commence an active life, shouted and sang with pleasure, as we turned our prows southward and began rowing against the stream.

Evening was coming on, one of the mildest and balmiest of the year, and as we pushed up through the narrow channel between Rhoda and the eastern shore, we almost fancied ourselves engaged in an adventure of the Arabian Nights. The trees from either bank threw out their boughs till they met and formed a leafy arcade above, through which streaks of light and patches of blue sky appeared like an infinitely rich and varied pattern. The Arabs, as they rowed, murmured a low song, plaintive, and keeping time with the oars. The refrain seemed to be a sort of bastard Greek, and I could distinctly catch the sounds *eis-en-tebe*, repeated with deep emphasis.

The stars began to glimmer faintly as we passed the palace of Halim Bey, from the windows of whose harim a chorus of female voices sent forth its music and perfume into the evening breeze. The singers, poor things, may, for ought I know, have looked on themselves in the light of captives, and the only word we heard signified bondage, but it may have been the bondage of love. Possibly they were women from Georgia or Circassia, singing the songs of Zion in a strange land and also in a strange language, for the word we caught was Arabic.

We probably form a false conception of the life of the harim, misled by writers who suppose its inhabitants to be swayed by a system of ideas different from that which really prevails among them. My own opinion is, that they are quite as happy as the rest of their sex, otherwise nature would not have given perpetuity to the institution, which seems quite as suitable to the East as very different institutions to the North. At any rate the women themselves are the best judges, and they appear upon the whole no less contented than their sisters of Frankestan.

Besides, their seclusion is not so absolute as we imagine. I have seen respectable men and their wives going out to spend the evening pleasantly in the fields between Cairo and Shoubra, forming little groups, but not so far removed as to prevent conversation. They did not, of course, belong to the upper classes, which everywhere sacrifice the heart and its best affections to pride and vanity; but were probably shop-keepers, or what are called in the East, little merchants, extremely comfortable, and, as we express it, well to do. At any rate, if mirth be a criterion, they were as happy as Greeks, for they talked, laughed, related stories and anecdotes, smoked, drank sherbet, and ate sweetmeats and all sorts of delicacies with much greater gusto than the same number of princes and princesses in the sombre North.

Again, when I visited the Mosque of Flowers,

I saw at least four or five hundred women, many of them of the highest rank, distributed through the various aisles, in pleasant little groups seated on carpets, some sewing, others suckling their children, others talking and laughing, or eating and drinking, while their slaves stood round in attendance. As I was dressed like a Turk, they bestowed no more attention on me than on any other person. So I gazed on them at my leisure, while I affected to be regarding the architecture, the colours of the painted windows, and the materials of the pavement.

Even in the bazaars, when not too strictly attended, the Muslim women sometimes venture to converse with strangers, sending forth their soft voices, at first, perhaps, from behind their veils, but as the dialogue warms, throwing these aside for a moment and exhibiting their beauty, as the moon flashes from behind a cloud. One day, as I was examining some linen for a turban, a Turkish lady, who had likewise come to purchase finery, addressing me quite in a familiar tone, said,

"That, O stranger, will not suit you; but this," touching some Manchester muslin as she spoke, "will look very handsome, though the fashion now is to wear the Fez plain."

The ice being thus unceremoniously broken, we continued talking on a variety of topics, though the female slave who attended her displayed numerous signs of anger or alarm. But the mistress was not

to be checked. The rare opportunity of conversing with a Frank having presented itself, she was resolved to make the most of it, and went on chatting and laughing for a full hour at least. As she put several questions to me respecting the females of Europe, I ventured to inquire, in my turn, into the internal economy of the harim, respecting which she disclosed to me some curious particulars, fully confirmed afterwards by more than one Levantine matron at Alexandria.

II.

However, I must not forget that I am now on the Nile, seated on the deck of my boat, watching the aspect of various objects on the shore, as we glide softly past them. The Pyramids after sunset looked like spectres rising up against the sky; the palm-trees, with their long hanging branches, stood motionless in the air; at intervals, over the plain, the peasants were seen driving home their cattle; here and there dogs barked; while from the scattered villages lights gleamed brightly between the groves and thickets. Heaven itself can scarcely be more beautiful than evening on the borders of the tropics. I could go on describing it for ever, and yet, in all likelihood, should never succeed in conveying to the reader a complete idea of its loveliness. A calm the most absolute broods upon earth and air; the Nile appears like a broad mirror,

reflecting all the images above and around it; a brilliant Aurora Borealis seems to linger in the sky as the grand representative of day; and the combined effect of all these phenomena is a serene, indescribable, delicious feeling pervading both mind and body.

When it was dark I desired Suliman to make me a little coffee, and also to distribute a few finjans among the Arabs. This cheap kindness on my part did me a world of service, for immediately afterwards Suliman came and explained to me the rules which regulate travelling on the Nile: as long as the sun was above the horizon, I might compel the men to row, or track, or, if the wind served, to hoist sails; but the sun being down, they were free to enjoy themselves as they pleased. He had been deputed, however, to inform me, that they were entirely at my service, since to them neither night nor day would make any difference. I had only to express my wish, and they would go on in the darkness as cheerfully as in the light.

This I thought a great point to be gained by a cup of coffee; but they inferred from the circumstance that I meant to be kind to them, and I trust that as many of them as are still on the Nile remember our voyage with as much pleasure as I do. I certainly used my best endeavours to make them happy, and they, in their turn, proved a most active, obliging, and grateful crew.

It is a misfortune, perhaps, to have been so

fortunate as I was in Egypt, since, if I had fallen in with a set of villains and cut-throats, perpetually plotting against my life, I might have imparted to this narrative something like the interest of tragedy. But my confounded Arabs were as mild and harmless as sheep, and when I lay down to sleep in the midst of them, I had no more apprehension for my safety than if I had been in the best guarded bedroom in London. There was no lock to my cabin door, and if there had been, I should not have used it. Suliman slept outside, under a matting shed, and we were altogether as accessible to robbers as the most unreasonable robber in the world could desire.

Still, let it not be supposed that because I was on the Nile I adopted the healthful habits of the country. Quite the contrary. Instead of going to bed soon after the sun, I took out pen, ink, and paper, and diligently recorded at length all the events of the day. Then I looked about among my books collected at Alexandria and Cairo, which were arranged neatly on their edges along the cabin floor, for something tempting to read, and generally amused myself with Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, or the Arabian Nights. Vere usually spent the evening with me, when we often got betrayed into erudite discussions, or ran over the story of our past lives, or smoked in silence, both thinking, perhaps, of individuals far away. On the first night of the voyage, each remained in his own

cabin, and at a late hour, when all was tranquil, I opened one of my windows and observed that his lamp was still burning.

III.

I had fortunately made the discovery that Suliman was a circulating library, and whenever I felt inclined to be amused, instead of sending out for a set of novels, I had but to call him, and express my wish to hear a story of old times. He would then fill his pipe, plant himself at the cabin door, and immediately commence with:—"There was once a king, a derwish, or a princess," and from that starting point go on, if I thought proper, till morning, deviating more or less according to the accidents of the previous day, or the strength of the coffee. And never in this world was novel read with half so much zest as his stories were listened to. While we thus amused ourselves, the drowsy Arabs, scattered over the deck, were mumbling slowly to each other, laughing and chatting, or more generally fast asleep. Then was the time for a tale of magic, full to overflowing of the supernatural, with Effrits for the principal actors, and lovely women hurried about the world and getting into all manner of scrapes through their damnable agency.

If my disclosures diminish my consequence

in the reader's eyes, I am very sorry for it. But I like to be exact, and would not on any account have him or her suppose me in a luxurious cabin, with all sorts of conveniences and comforts at my beck. On the contrary, a little green box of Arab manufacture, which I have still, and hope I may never part with, served me for a table: on this I dined, even when Vere was with me; on this I took my coffee, sitting before it cross-legged, like an infidel; on this I leaned to smoke, while Suliman related his stories; and on this I wrote those endless notes which have preserved for me a minute picture of the life I led on the Nile. Over this box, out of compliment to civilization, Suliman spread a table-cloth. My coffee-cups, of real china, were ornamented with purple and gold, and my zerfs, or metallic stands, of silver filagree or plain brass, but polished as bright as gold through Suliman's industry.

IV.

I now sometimes fancy I did not make the most of my opportunities, yet, on examination, I find I did. A certain number of hours it was absolutely necessary to give up to sleep, and as this was often long and protracted, it may fairly be numbered among my enjoyments; perhaps, indeed, to certain periods of our lives it is our greatest

pleasure. Whatever the power which regulates our thoughts then, it possesses an irresistible force, and going back over the materials of our lives, reconstructs them, and presents us with a series of pictures brighter than any we ever beheld by day: then joy comes to us in floods; then we perform impossibilities; then we live and die at once; then we are present at our own funerals, and select the spot for our own ashes, and are our own chief-mourners, and weep over ourselves, till we are at length soothed and pacified by time; then our loves come forth from the tomb, and the smiles of forgotten days are bright as of yore, and the purple light of youth plays about us, and our ideas mould themselves into grand processions, which march by, eclipsing by their magnificence all the splendour and glory of the world.

I have a friend, who, in the midst of many sorrows, has always enjoyed pleasant dreams; the reason, perhaps, being that the mind has remained pure, that the recollection of the past, though sad, is not humiliating, and that consequently the prospect of the future, whatever it may be in other respects, is brightly lighted up by the rays of a clear conscience.

My waking hours were devoted to occupations little less agreeable than my dreams. I rose invariably before the sun, and breakfasted by twilight. Suliman, ere he called me, usually took a walk to some neighbouring village to purchase fresh eggs,

buffalo's milk, and anything else that might be required for the day. The air at that hour was generally cold, for which reason he was in the habit of wrapping himself in a heavy Scotch plaid of mine lined with green baize. In this, with his bare legs appearing beneath, and his small angular fox-like face, surmounted by a dingy fez, peeping forth from between the turned-up velvet collar above, he cut one of the most comic figures imaginable.

I am not by any means an epicuræan, yet I find it impossible not to remember with pleasure the breakfasts Suliman made for me on the Nile. He used to set the milk to boil in an earthen vessel on one little furnace, while on another he prepared the coffee, genuine Mokha, with not a particle of its aroma diminished by the sea-air. He then opened the table-cloth, and in the centre placed a large china bowl, into which he poured the buffalo's milk, boiling, frothing, and smelling like a nosegay. To this he then added about a third of coffee, with plenty of white sugar, which produced the most delicious mixture in the world.

Generally, when moored near large towns, we were able to procure fresh cakes, white and delicate as muffins, forty for a piastre, and these, when warmed on the charcoal and buttered, would have tempted the appetite of a hermit. Then followed an abundant supply of new-laid eggs, kabobs, cold beef, and potted luxuries of which I forget the

names. Suliman and I always breakfasted together, with this peculiarity, that he sat down outside the cabin under the matting-shed, while I remained inside. Often when the mornings were cold, I pressed him to enter, but this, he said, would be very wrong, and on no occasion during the whole voyage did he ever abate from the respect which he thought he owed me, or take advantage of my willingness to treat him on a more familiar footing.

V.

The breakfast over, I stepped ashore, and having desired the Reis to wait for me towards evening at a certain village, struck off into the plain to visit the dwellings of the Arabs, to observe them at work in the fields, to talk with them, ask them questions, and learn as well as I could their opinions on their own condition. Vere was usually with me, and we were accompanied by Suliman and Abou-Zaid, who carried our purses and our bags of Gebeli, that when we found a pleasant shady tree or a sheikh's tomb, we might sit down and smoke.

One day, just before passing out of Lower Egypt into the Heptanomis, I witnessed a scene in which I took a somewhat imprudent part. Finding a number of Arabs at work in a field, with their wives, daughters, and little children, I stopped as usual to talk with them. The sheikh

of the village was there, a fine patriarchal old fellow, with long white beard, and a countenance which Michael Angelo would have been delighted to paint. With him I entered into conversation, and while we were discussing some topic connected with his people, two agents of Government came across the plain, and produced by their approach so powerful an effect upon the Arabs, that from having been in the gayest and most talkative humour, they became completely silent. Even my friend the sheikh seemed to tremble, and could scarcely command himself sufficiently to keep up the dialogue. Suddenly he interrupted himself, and cried out:—

"See! they are seizing my people—oh God! my own sons!"

It was true. These were the Pasha's recruiting officers, who, having selected the finest and handsomest young men of the party, were about to take them away for soldiers. I asked the sheikh why he did not set his people on them, and mob them out of the field. The tears were in his eyes, and tears in the eyes of the old are always doubly painful to witness. He replied to me with great bitterness,—

"Were I to do what you say, the tyrant would send and destroy our village, and blot out its inhabitants from the face of the earth. But see, they are taking my two sons—my only sons!"

And putting his hands before his face, the old

man cried like a child. Then striving to be more calm, he said,—

"Come here, my sons, let me bless you before you go; but what shall I say to your mother and to your sisters? God is great! I am old, very old, and I shall never more behold your faces! Yet, my sons, go, if the Pasha wills it. I have no power; I am the sheikh of this village, but no one heeds me, no one will assist me, no one will lift up his hand to prevent my face from becoming black for ever, and the house of my fathers desolate as a wilderness!"

His voice then became choked, and he was unable to utter another word. I went among the young men, and asked them where were their nabouts—sticks four feet long, shod with iron. They pointed to them lying on the ground beside their clothes.

"Take them up," said I, "and go along with me."

Followed by this body of youths, which would have been formidable but for the secret apprehension of the Pasha that bowed down their spirits, I went to the Government agents, two rascally Franks, from I know not what part of Europe, and intimated I thought it would be dangerous for them to force away the sheikh's sons.

"Besides," added I, "it is a pity; you can be blind for this once, and not see what fine fellows they are."

They asked me if I would be answerable for

the consequences to the Pasha: to which I replied in the affirmative; but I also added in a confidential tone, that I would not be at all answerable for the consequences to them, if they did not make their escape very speedily. "For look," said I, "the villagers are showing signs of fury, the women are taking up clods of earth, the men are flourishing their sticks, and you had better make yourselves scarce."

The advice was no sooner given than followed. Away they scampered towards the river, and their flight being the signal for pursuit, the young women hurled after them large clods, some of which hit, while others missed; the young men shouted and chased them with their nabouts, and I was right glad when I saw the vagabonds descend the river's bank, and push off in their boat from the shore.

The sheikh now came up to me, and seizing both my hands in his, invoked the blessing of Allah upon me, called me the preserver of his sons, and invited me to spend the remainder of the day at his house, that his wife and his daughters might express their gratitude, and that I might share the hospitality of an Arab. I thanked him heartily, accepted some dates which he offered me, but having promised to meet my boat a great many miles up the river, I could not remain; otherwise I should probably have passed a very pleasant day among these humble and grateful villagers.

I ought to add that no inconvenience accrued to me from the affair, and that on making inquiries on my return, I found the Frank agents, partly perhaps through prudence, had displayed no vindictiveness, so that the sheikh was still happy in the affection and support of his sons.

VI.

It sometimes happens, that in the midst of the pleasantest scenes, your fancy wanders away to others less beautiful it may be, but different, and, therefore, agreeable by way of contrast. Vere and I, though both of us fond of Egypt, and perfectly satisfied with our sojourn on the Nile, often used in the evening, over our coffee, to revert to Italy and Switzerland. He had travelled through the German cantons, and was familiar with many objects unknown to me. He had, besides, picked up innumerable stories and anecdotes, which he from time to time related for the enlivening of our evenings. His manner of narration was dry and quaint, bordering frequently on the comic, though he seldom laughed himself; but in whatever this peculiarity consisted, I find it impracticable to preserve it. Much, I dare say, was attributable to the tones of his voice, to his looks, to his odd gestures, and to that curious collocation and choice of words in which he delighted.

One night, just before our arrival at the grottoes of Benihassan, we got talking of people we had

known in Europe, and he gradually found himself engaged in telling a story connected with the Lake of the Four Cantons.

"Some years ago, while a student at Oxford, I undertook a pedestrian excursion through German-Switzerland, and was induced to linger about the above lake by the unrivalled beauty of its scenery. I pitched my tent near the hamlet of Hochstollen, embosomed in pine-forests, with overhanging rocks above, and scattered down the slope of what was almost a precipice to the very brink of the water.

"You should have seen, St. John," said he, "how the cottages threatened to tumble after each other, and precipitate themselves in a sort of waltz into the lake. There was one house, not perhaps prettier than the others, but rendered remarkable by the circumstances I am about to relate. It was the abode of a strange sort of couple, who, though they had lived together several years, were still young. They had, however, no children, and from the want of this cement to married life, which enables characters in themselves, perhaps, cross-grained enough, to fit beautifully one into another, they were constantly falling into misunderstandings, which sometimes degenerated into quarrels.

"The husband would not be so unreasonable as to confess he was angry with his wife because she was childless, nor did the wife ever give utterance to the idea that the same fact preyed on her mind. But it is believed to have been a fact, nevertheless.

Children are a sort of neutral ground, which check the effects of the fiery passions, and enable them to spend their force before they come in contact with each other. When fathers and mothers fall out, the children, with their innocent looks of love, often disarm both, and send them into one another's arms more affectionate than ever. But what is more desolate than a house without a child? Its inhabitants appear to be waiting in anxious and painful suspense for a repetition of God's original blessing on the human race: 'Increase and multiply.' They seem, instead, to be labouring under a curse. The imprisoned souls of those who should be their children, hover in visions over their pillows, and haunt them by night. Among the greatest of God's gifts the second in order is wanting: to the husband the wife first, and next, those who reproduce her image and perpetuate her beauty, and promise immortality to her memory.

"But, as I have said, the couple who lived in the cottage on the border of the lake were childless. Among the inhabitants of the hamlet they were known simply as Crispalt and Riga, who, to add to their misfortunes, had inherited a small property, which enabled them to dispense with labour, and consequently condemned them to perpetual ennui. The want of employment, indeed, had probably more to do than the want of children with the discomfort of their marriage hearth. They knew not how to amuse themselves; all the nume-

rous contrivances of civilization for killing time. were wanting; they had neither Opera nor Theatre nor Concert, nor the dancing girls, nor circulating library. Had they been Papists, they might have taken refuge in perpetual devotion, in confessions and penances, and the Pope knows what besides; but to complete the circle of their misfortunes, they were Protestants—sturdy, high-principled, though not at all devout. In any other part of the world, and with other principles, they might have taken refuge in intrigue, but they cared not one single straw for the society of strangers, and stuck resolutely together, though they quarrelled like devils.

"In relating events of this sort, one wishes one could reconstruct the moral world, and make all those people happy who deserve to be so. Perhaps, however, you will say that Crispalt and Riga were not of this number; since possessing an abundance of this world's goods, and married exactly according to their own desires, they were peevish, discontented, and apparently always ready to explode and fly off into infinite space. When two people love each other, what is it that can make them unhappy? Why does not the whole instrument of existence become harmony at their touch? Why should there ever be frowns between them?

"I have a great mind to describe this loving and unhappy pair. Riga was a young and fair woman, with rich auburn hair, large blue eyes,

and features of inexpressible sweetness. When she smiled, you would have thought it was a blink of sunshine from the sky. Still she could put off this smile, and be angry and even fierce occasionally; would spoil her delicate voice by speaking loud—I must not say screaming—and dim her bright eyes with tears of ill-nature. She had the prettiest hand in the canton, and when she chose to make use of it properly, could allay the fiercest storm ever bred in her husband's mind. She had but to lay it gently on his arm, or to chuck him under the chin, or to smooth his cheek, or even to slap him slightly on the face, to make him as quiet as a lamb. But would she do it? Sometimes she would, and sometimes she would not.

"With regard to Crispalt himself, he seemed to have all the capriciousness and obstinacy of a mule. That he loved Riga dearly, no one could doubt, but he chiefly proved it by worrying her to death, by being jealous of her without the slightest cause, by swearing she was cold, indifferent, fickle, and the Lord knows what besides.

VII.

"Nothing in life is so painful as to witness the decline of love. The decline of life is far more tolerable. In the latter case you dally with decay, and are half inclined to forgive Time, on account of the joys he has bestowed on you in his passage; but when love decays, it is like a gradual blotting

out of the soul. One ray after another is extinguished; darkness comes on, after which the heart knows no dawn. Into this abyss of hopelessness, Crispalt and Riga seemed to be fast falling. For many months the thought suggested itself to both of them, that it would be far better to part. To part? And could it be that it had come to that? Part from all their souls had ever held dear, and turn out again into the wide and trackless wilderness of the world in search of something to love? A few years before, they would as soon have thought of plunging into the crater of a volcano. But the heart undergoes strange transformations, and God only knows through what influence it comes to pass, that those who once constituted our all in all become cold and indifferent to us.

"But the idea had projected itself into the sphere of their minds, like Satan into Paradise, and they both nursed it secretly like one of the brood of hell, to bring forward and startle each other when they should next quarrel. The time soon came, and the fiery bolt was launched, first, I regret to say, by the woman's hand. But why was this? Simply, because her love was the more impetuous, the more ardent, the more intolerant of indifference and neglect. She thought, and thought rightly, it were better that the heart should burst at once, than go on mouldering through long years of anguish, and become a heap of ashes in the breast.

"But the shock was too dreadful. It produced a reaction and a reconciliation, and they appeared for a time happier than ever. But there was no golden link of vitality between them, no third nature in which both their natures mingled—no beautiful diminutive mirror in which they could see their own faces reflected, and made ten times more beautiful by the process. Again, therefore, the terrible thought of parting presented itself; and after a series of storms and struggles, it was agreed that the tie between them should be broken, and that all the world of love which their connexion had called into existence should be annihilated.

"It is necessary in such cases for the parties requiring a divorce to proceed together to the capital of the canton, and there, in the presence of the magistrates, to state their reasons in person, after which the document is made out and given them without much difficulty. Still the thing, we are told, seldom happens. Not that marriages are happier there than elsewhere, but that the union of the sexes in every part of the world is generally productive of more happiness than misery, and that, the balance being in favour of the *statu quo*, divorce is seldom had recourse to.

"When the terrible morning arrived, Riga and Crispalt, who had, for the first time, slept in different beds, arose to make preparation for crossing the lake. Slept, did I say? I wrong them greatly.

They did not sleep—on the contrary, they lay on those beds a prey to the fiercest agony, reproaching themselves bitterly for what had taken place, but each doubting the faith and affection of the other, and therefore submitting to what appeared to them a sort of destiny. Still, while the night continued, they prayed that the day might never come; and when it did come, grey, cold and comfortless, they hoped that the boat which was to carry them over might be shaken to pieces by some sudden storm.

"Once during the night Crispalt had risen, and, taking the lamp which stood burning beside his bed, proceeded noiselessly towards the door of Riga's chamber. Should he enter? If he did, would she not receive him with coldness or with taunts? He put aside the light, and peeped in through the door, which had been left partly open. Riga lay on her side, her left elbow buried in the pillow, and her cheek resting on her hand. She appeared to be looking at the candle, which flickered and wasted before her. Did her countenance exhibit any token of softness or relenting? No; her features were rigid, stern, forbidding. Crispalt, with a painful wringing of the heart, returned to his bed.

"They descended from their bed-rooms nominally to breakfast, but avoided each other, that the one might not behold the other's weakness. To the relief of Riga, tears came in abundance, but

the fountain of Crispalt's eyes appeared to be congealed, and the waters, which could not find their way outwards, ran in like streams of fire upon the heart; but there was nothing in the external deportment to reveal his state of mind. They kept apart; no angel of mercy came to act as interpreter between them; abandoned by heaven and earth, they blindly proceeded to break that chain on which, unknown to themselves, their lives depended, and perhaps, also, their hopes of happiness hereafter.

"At length the boatman came to announce that the bark was ready; that the day—a summer's day—was fine; that the trip, therefore, would be short; and that in a few hours they would again be single, ready to woo or be wooed by strangers. Riga went forth with a more poignant feeling of anguish, than she would have gone forth even to follow Crispalt to his grave. It was much the same with him. But neither understood the other, and into the boat accordingly they stepped,—the fatal boat, which was to waft them beyond the precincts of the land of love, into the dark and cheerless regions of hatred, shunned by God and man.

"They would not sit beside each other: Crispalt threw himself sullenly on a sloping plank at the bottom of the boat; while Riga sat trembling on the side, looking at the water, into which her

tears dropped like rain. Not a word, not a look was exchanged between them. With that perverseness, commonly called obstinacy, but which deserves some other name, they mutually triumphed in what they regarded as strength of will, though in reality it was the extreme of weakness, littleness, and folly. Could they have interpreted the command written in the great countenance of nature, which on all sides towered in sunshine and grandeur, they would have rushed into each other's arms. The waves leaped and frolicked in mute happiness around; the woods nodded to the breeze; the birds were all song and merriment; and even the boatmen, as they rowed, appeared to be under the influence of joy, and thanked God inwardly that they were not proceeding to obtain a divorce from the mothers of their children.

VIII.

"For some time the weather continued beautiful, and the lake smooth; but on turning a rocky point, the wind swept round in gusts from the snowy pinnacles of the Alps, and the water became suddenly rough—the boat gave an unexpected lurch, and Riga, who was not just then thinking of self-preservation, fell backward into the lake and sank in an instant. Crispalt could scarcely be said to witness this, but the boatman's shout

bringing him to himself, he looked about, and seeing she had disappeared, eagerly inquired what had become of her. He was told she had fallen overboard.

"You should have seen his look. There is a mystery in all the operations of nature, none of which, however, seem so mysterious as the changes in the temper of our minds. Forgetting everything that had gone before, or rather converting it into a source of reproach and self-accusation, he looked upon himself as a murderer. His face grew blank and deadly pale,—horror sat in his eyes. All the love of his life came back upon him—she, his Riga, drowned before his eyes, the woman who had first awakened affection in his soul, who had made him know what it is to be a man, who had in days gone by rendered his life as happy as that of the angels! All this shot instantaneously through his brain, and like a lightning flash he plunged into the lake.

"Riga, who soon rose to the surface, now floated at a considerable distance, for the wind blowing fiercely had carried the boat in a different direction. Crispalt, a powerful swimmer, made towards her, as the deserted mariner in the wide Atlantic towards the spar on which alone his life depends. She had been, once, more than all the world to him; and if he failed to reach her, he cared not if the whole universe were the next moment annihilated.

"Between the crests of the waves she now appeared and disappeared by turns. How she floated so long I know not, but probably her struggles, being loth to drown, produced, for a few seconds, the effect of swimming. Crispalt put forth all his strength, but the winds and waves setting against him, he made comparatively little way. What would he not now have given to be treading the solid earth with Riga beside him! And now, should he, or should he not save her? He was contending for life or death against the violence of the breakers, which, as he dashed forwards, bore him in a contrary direction. Still she floated, her long hair, which had got loose, streaming upon the waves. His whole heart was now moulded into a prayer that he might reach her, that he might clasp her once more in his arms, though but for an instant; and, if he could not save, that he might at least perish with her,—so wayward, so changeful, so contradictory is human affection!

"At length, by desperate exertions, he came up, seized her, and then turning round, made towards the boat, which approached to abridge his labour. They were soon taken out of the water. Riga was placed on the cross plank, and Crispalt, kneeling before her, asked in a suppressed whisper, if they had not better turn back. She bent down towards him, and replied, 'Yes.' In another moment he held her in his arms, kissing her face and entreating

her forgiveness. She answered in the same language, conjuring him to pardon her all that had passed, and protesting never more to doubt his love, or give him a moment's reason to doubt hers.

"The boatmen saw which way their course lay, and without any ado put about and made towards Hochstollen.

"If there were Muses in these days, I would sacrifice much upon their altars to be gifted with the power to describe what passed in the minds of the husband and wife as they returned towards their own house. All the sorrows and sufferings of years were obliterated; joy unutterable took possession of their souls; every trace of anger and unkindness had disappeared as if they had never been; and the day of their reconciliation was holier and more glorious in their eyes than that of their first union.

"To complete the measure of their felicity, Riga, who, in truth, bore a double life at the time, became a mother, and child after child was born to them, so that their family grew to be one of the most numerous and beautiful in all Switzerland.

"The anniversary of their return was always celebrated as a fête in the family, and by degrees the people of the hamlet demanded permission to join in it, until it at length became a festival, observed first by that district, and soon after by the whole canton. This shows on what slight

accidents our happiness in the present life depends, and at the same time how dangerous it is to believe in the extinction of love, and to keep back those explanations which may preserve the heart from suffering, and the soul, perhaps, from crime."

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